HIGH NOON AT MIDNIGHT

BY BRUCE R. CORDELL

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Sensitivity Reader	Jonathan Connor Self

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Associate Editor	Dominique Dickey
Senior Designer	Bruce R. Cordell
Designer and Developer	Sean K. Reynolds

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Printed in Canada

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout this book, you'll see page references to various items accompanied by this symbol. These are page references to the Cypher System Rulebook (CSR), where you can find additional details about that rule, ability, creature, or concept.

Some of these references are accompanied by a separate Cypher System Bestiary reference.

Westerns weave through my earliest memories, owing partly to growing up in South Dakota—the real Deadwood was only a day's ride away from where I was born. But if I'm being honest, my 10-year-old self's visceral reaction to the dominance of western style, movies, and stories was a hard swerve into science fiction and traditional fantasy. Who wanted to imagine cowboy boots and a horse when you could visualize jet boots and a spaceship, or a spell book and a dragon? Not me—at least, not me as an adolescent. So western entertainment and I parted ways early.

Fast forward a couple of decades. I'm not sure how it happened, but I accidentally watched a few standout movies, including *Tombstone* and *Unforgiven*. Whoa! I realized how much rich storytelling and mythmaking westerns had to offer. I even picked up and read a couple of Louis L'Amour–credited western novels. I finally got the appeal and gained an appreciation for the genre.

But my heart still belonged to science fiction and fantasy. If I were going to read, watch, or write something, it was going to include a magic sword or faster-than-light (FTL) travel.

It wasn't until the *Deadlands* roleplaying game showed up on my mental radar that I realized fusion was the answer. Westerns with supernatural and/or sci-fi elements? Sign me up, pardner! Somewhere in there, I also became a "Brown Coat" (at least in spirit), someone so entranced with the sci-fi/western *Firefly* show that I and my partner dressed up as Mal and Zoie for Halloween and other cosplay events. More recent shows like *Westworld* (and other stuff noted under Weird West Inspirational Watching and Reading) only heightened my appreciation for combining the speculative with western themes.

page 8

So here we are. I reckon the "weird west" is an amazing realm for the imagination, and I aim to show you why. Let your mind run wild with visions of magic six-shooters, spaceship heists, demon-hunting marshals, bounty-hunting ghosts, a Tomb Moon irregularly winking in the sky, and showdowns between alchemical gunslingers and creatures out of nightmare.

THE GHOST RANGE

The Ghost Range, page 144

A lot of *High Noon at Midnight* is devoted to tools for you to create your own weird west setting. But if you're looking for an already-imagined place where western themes meet ancient horrors and magic, look no further than The Ghost Range. Ghost-haunted and demon-plagued, the place owes many of its secrets to long-vanished antediluvian entities first discovered by Native Nations, who wisely declared any location those entities had touched as proscribed zones. Less'n you got a death wish, best stay clear of those.

PART 1

WEIRD WEST WORLDBUILDING

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CHAPTER 1

THE WEIRD WEST

What is the “weird west?” Most people are familiar with westerns, whose popularity reached a zenith in the 1950s, ’60s, and early ’70s. Films like *High Noon* (1952) and *High Plains Drifter* (1973), shows like *Gunsmoke* (1955–1975), and the many western novels by Louis L’Amour portrayed showdowns between skilled gunslingers, lawmen with secret pasts, quests for vengeance in lawless lands, train robberies, wide-open spaces, John Wayne seeking justice, Clint Eastwood drinking excessive amounts of whiskey (apparently, so he could shoot straight), and more.

Despite (or perhaps partly because of) its familiarity, the genre’s popularity has greatly declined since then. Reasons include the aforementioned oversaturation, criticism for romanticizing a period of violence and perpetuating stereotypes against native peoples, and consumers getting excited by other genres, especially science fiction and fantasy. *Star Wars* debuted in 1977, *E.T.* in 1982, *Back to the Future* in 1985, *The X-Files* from 1993 to 2002, and the first live-action film adaptation of *Lord of the Rings* was released in 2001. During this same period, contemporary action movies grew in popularity, until today we have a smorgasbord of such properties, including the various *John Wick* films, the *Mission Impossible* films, the *Fast & Furious* films, and so on.

Gunsmoke *was one of longest-running series of all time, running from 1955 to 1975.*

So, what if a genre came along that blended classic western tropes and settings with fantasy, horror, science fiction, and action?

You’d get dusty saloons haunted by vengeful spirits, gunfights with cyborg outlaws, bounty hunters in spaceships, cowboys wielding magical six-shooters firing banishing rounds, and even weirder stuff.

In other words, you’d get the weird west.

To be fair, the weird west was part of the western genre nearly from the beginning, starting with B-movie westerns, pulp magazines, and comic books. TV shows like *The Wild Wild West* (1965–1969) featured horror and supernatural elements. The 1966 film *Billy the Kid Versus Dracula* puts the weird right in the title, merging horror and wild west themes.

Weird Western Tales—a 1972–1980 comic book series—featured darker, supernatural western situations, and helped cement “weird west” as the genre’s name. And of course, there’s Stephen King’s *The Gunslinger* (number one in The Dark Tower series, published in 1982), which helped expand the genre beyond mere camp and probably did as much as any other property to keep alive an appreciation for weird west narratives.

All these properties, along with the titles noted in the next section, and probably many more besides, helped inspire this tabletop RPG weird west genre book for the Cypher System.

Here in the Seattle area where this book was written, we acknowledge that we live on the ancestral homelands of the Muckleshoot, Suquamish, Duwamish, Snoqualmie, and Tulalip peoples. They were this area’s original caretakers for thousands of years. The Seattle area is also home to many more Native, First Nations, and Indigenous people from our region and continent.

If you’re curious what Indigenous people once lived on land near you, this interactive map (made by Native Land Digital, an Indigenous-led nonprofit) is an amazing research tool:

native-land.ca

A WORK OF WEIRD HISTORICAL FICTION

High Noon at Midnight is not historically accurate. It is intended as a weird take on your favorite western tropes, as opposed to simulating actual history, a lot of which wouldn't make for a particularly fun game. Insofar as this book touches on congruences with the real world at all, it purposefully posits options where most promises and treaties made with native peoples were actually kept. What *High Noon at Midnight* doesn't do is delve into the despicable activities of the colonizing era that saw the USA destroy the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples; the enslavement of African peoples; the exploitation of women, non-European immigrants, and (eventually) freed peoples; and other injustices.

The real history of the American West is complicated, beautiful, tragic, and a lot less exciting than romanticized versions portray. Those interested in an actual dive into the period can find great resources like *The West* (1996 documentary by Ken Burns), *Black Pioneers: Legacy in the American West* by Carolyn Mazloomi (museum exhibition), *The American West: History, Myth, and Legacy* (online university series of lectures), *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023 film), and many more with just a bit of online research.

Prior to running an adventure or campaign set in this historical time period, talk to your players about your plans. Being upfront about these topics is at the very least respectful of actual historical events. "Wild west" and "Old West" literature romanticizes what was an often-brutal era, even for those who survived, but especially for those whose homelands were lost. Even so, some of these topics could be consent issues for players.

For more information about consent in gaming, download the free Consent in Gaming *PDF at myMCG.info/consent*

WEIRD WEST INSPIRATIONAL WATCHING AND READING

If you're looking to get into a weird west headspace, check out a few of the following, in addition to the titles previously mentioned.

Cowboys & Aliens (2011 film)
Jonah Hex (many comic book appearances and movie)
Preacher (2015–2019 series, based on a comic book series of the same name)
*Unforgiven** (1992 film)
The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr. (1993–1994 series)
Deadlands (1996 tabletop RPG)
The Wild Wild West (1965–1969 series)
Wild Wild West (1999 film)
The Burrowers (2008 film)
Ravenous (1999 film)
Midnight, Texas (TV series)
Gallowwalkers (2012 film)
Bone Tomahawk (2015 film)
*Deadwood** (2004–2006 series)
*Young Guns** (1988 film)
Back to the Future Part III (1990 film)
*Django Unchained** (2012 film)
Westworld (2016–2022 series)
Firefly (2002–2003 series)
*Tombstone** (1993 film)
*Surrounded** (2023 film)
Cowboy Bebop (1998 anime series)
Pale Rider (1985 film)
*True Grit** (2010 film)

**Not strictly "weird" west but too inspirational not to include.*

TRAIL MARKERS FOR HIGH NOON AT MIDNIGHT

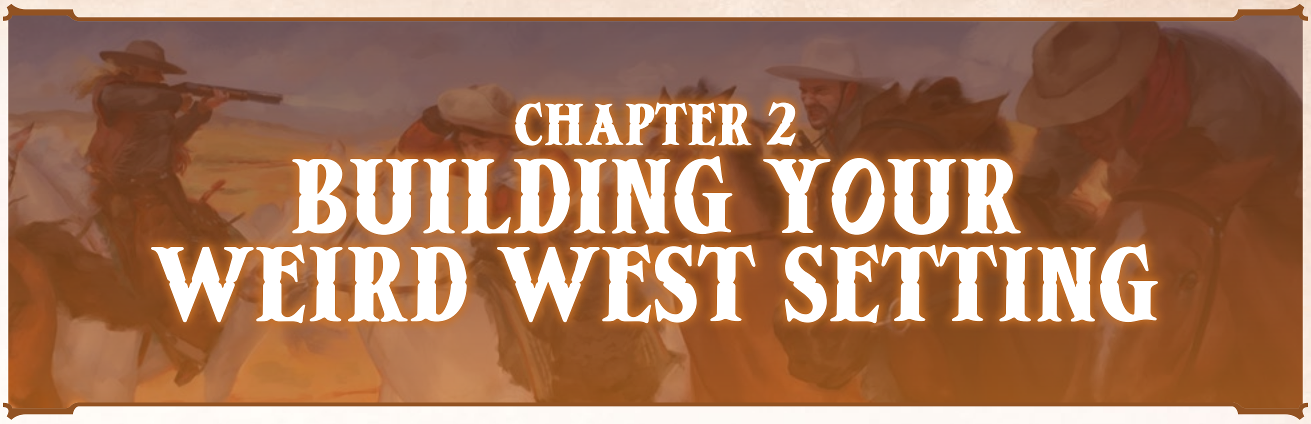
In Part 1, we highlight various methods of building your own weird west game with advice, examples, weird west set pieces, plot ideas, optional rules to consider, creatures and NPCs, and more.

Part 2 provides new character options (descriptors, flavors, foci, and so on), equipment, cyphers, and artifacts.

Part 3 introduces The Ghost Range, a setting you can use as the heart of your own weird west game, drop in as part of a larger world you're building, or merely use as inspiration.

Part 4 concludes with a handful of weird west adventures and Cypher Shorts guaranteed to make your heart race.

So, mosey on in—this book is chock-full of tales wilder than a jackalope hopped up on tequila. But keep clear of the strange gunslingers that lurk here, less'n you're looking for a midnight showdown at high noon.



CHAPTER 2
BUILDING YOUR WEIRD WEST SETTING

Reckon you're ready to run a weird west game. But what's *your* setting like? Is it a regular western with just a smidge of the uncanny, or one where spur-wearing demons regularly order whiskey in the saloon? Is it a "western" set in the future where endless parsecs of space are the final frontier? Are "monsters" mostly bad people and wild animals, or do horrible things also lurk beneath the plains? How much do regular folk interact with the weird; does everyone know about it, or is it something only a few people have to deal with?

This chapter walks you through ways to quickly put together a weird west setting using different approaches, a handful of which might provide the inspiration you're looking for.

MAJOR TOPICS

This chapter covers many topics about worldbuilding for a weird west setting. For your convenience, they're listed here with page numbers.

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> **"I won't be wronged, I won't be insulted, and I won't be laid a hand on. I don't do these things to other people, and I require the same from them."**
>
> **—J.B Books in *The Shootist***

BORROWING FROM OTHER SOURCES

As the inspirations list demonstrates, lots of shows, movies, novels, and RPGs offer interesting content you can borrow for your weird west game. If you've picked up this book, it's possible you already have some favorites. Something that energizes you. Which is perfect, because when you're a game master (GM) for a game and/or writer of a setting whose core idea captures your imagination, players and readers pick up on that excitement.

Even if the players aren't familiar with the weird source material that inspires your game, they'll respond to your enthusiasm, and soon enough, add their own energy to the experience. Even so, most players probably have at least some exposure to the western genre. Like you, they may be drawn to the idea of experiencing this otherwise well-trodden genre through the lens of the weird. They can lean into their wild west preconceptions, then savor each time you subvert those expectations with something uncanny.

Borrowing could be a straight-up homage to the source material you chose. Maybe all your PCs are after a strange alien artifact found in an old mine, like the character Brisco County Jr. Even so, you'll have many opportunities to customize the scenario for your own game. Customization examples include:

Inspirations, page 8

d6	Customization
1	Your campaign is based on the *Deadwood* TV show, but it takes place on (and is the name of) a terraformed, settled moon of Jupiter or Saturn.
2	Loosely based on *Back to the Future Part III*, your game follows modern-day characters who time travel back to pivotal moments in the Old West in order to keep supernatural forces from disrupting history.
3	In your game, PCs think they're typical Old West characters, only to discover they're robots in a simulation, à la the *Westworld* TV show.
4	A game based on *Cowboys & Aliens*, but the PCs are government agents with advanced tech of their own.
5	A game based on the intricacies of the *John Wick* film series, but instead of the modern day, the events play out in the weird west.
6	Derived from one of the many *James Bond* films, set in the weird west, with the PCs having access—thanks to Q—to all sorts of wondrous gadgets and potions.

You don't have to adhere to the official canon of the source material; make it your own. That way it'll be unique to your table and group.

WESTERN VOYAGER
VOYAGER

CREATING A BRAND-NEW SETTING

"Brand new" is relative, of course, because it's fun to season your game with exciting elements from the stories you love. Even so, those elements could serve as mere inspirations for a fresh setting of your own creation. Maybe you already know or suspect how amazing it feels to sit down to fashion an entirely new setting. Though let's not sugarcoat it; starting from scratch can be tough.

But don't fret. *High Noon at Midnight* has your back. In this section, a series of setting-related topics and questions (and immediately executable sample options) provide several potential starting points, or help you move along if you get bogged down creatively. Even if you are an experienced worldbuilder, these guidelines can help fill in some details, create new twists, and help you approach the topic from different angles to get your creative juices flowing.

This chapter is bursting with options, as are those that follow. So many, in fact, that you won't be able to use them all. Nor should you. Once your setting starts taking shape, you've probably answered the important questions and have an idea of the kinds of story and mechanics that will help bring your campaign to life.

MOSTLY HISTORICALLY FICTITIOUS

If your setting takes place on Earth (it might not; see World Options, hereafter), you could consider how historically accurate you want to be. Just by asking the question, you might come up with a nugget or two of interesting worldbuilding. A few options follow.

An easy decision is *not* to worry about history at all. If your setting isn't the American West on Earth in the 1800s, the question may not even come up. But even if that time frame and location describe your game, you're under no obligation to stay true to recorded events. After all, you're going to run a game where magic, time travel, or something else weird influences the story.

In a mostly historically fictitious game, you create an alternate timeline where western styles and themes are what matter most. For example, one or more of the following might be true in your game.

d6	Alternate History
1	Abraham Lincoln survived an assassination attempt because his mind was preserved in a forgeborn body; he still maintains the presidency.
2	The Civil War ended early because a strange mist seeped out of the woods and ate the Confederacy, the Union, or both.
3	Nikola Tesla invented a technique to trap demons inside a space bounded by electrified wire; "Tesla lassos" (a tanglefoot lariat variant) are now commonly equipped for expeditions into demon-haunted lands (like Perdition).
4	The Wright Brothers' first flight was on the back of a quetzalsaur specifically bred to carry howdahs.
5	The Revolutionary War was lost, and the British maintain rule in the American Territories via super-powered individuals known collectively as Fists of the Crown.
6	Indigenous people were the first to land on the moon in the 1200s via secret paths and have since fashioned a handful of terraformed regions; see The Ghost Range for a deeper exploration of this idea.

Forgeborn, page 84

Tanglefoot lariat, page 142

Perdition, page 172

Quetzalsaur, page 79

The Ghost Range, page 144

> "Kid, there's something I ought to tell you. I never shot anybody before."—Butch Cassidy
>
> "One hell of a time to tell me."—the Sundance Kid, in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*

HISTORY DIVERGES AT WEIRD ADVENT

As the last section demonstrates, a mostly historically accurate setting might reach a nexus point where things go off the rails in a completely new direction, after which things just get weirder and weirder. In this setting, it's up to you to decide if the divergence happened a long time ago, just a few years ago, or during your game so that the nature of the historical divergence comes as a shock to PCs, who must react accordingly.

Examples of the kind of things that could cause history to diverge include the following.

d6	Everything Was Normal, Until. . .
1	The Donner Party went missing in the mountains in 1846. They resorted to cannibalism for survival . . . but those that survived did so because they'd become zombies.
2	The atmosphere began draining away through dimensional holes across the West in 1860; small posses made up of the law and other defenders pass through them regularly to stop whatever's on the other side, though only about half return successfully.
3	In 1868, demons broke free from some ancient prison plane and tried to claim the American West as their own.
4	The Difference Engine, completed in 1822, gained sentience and attempted to take over the entire world by creating an army of robotic servitors. The American West is one of the last regions still free.
5	After the total eclipse of 1860, small numbers of apparently random people developed superpowers, or if viewed through another lens, a divine spark.
6	The New Madrid Earthquakes in the central Mississippi Valley that began in 1811 were precursors for an invasion by kaiju.

Nightcrawlers, page 79

Zombie, page 371

Shadow elf, page 352

Kaiju, page 338

Zombie, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 170*

SOMEWHAT HISTORICALLY ACCURATE

It's possible you'd like your setting to be somewhat or mostly historically accurate, with a few exceptions (including whatever makes your setting weird). One way to do so is to set a reference period that includes specific historical events as your foundation, but then incorporate weird elements, even as you mostly keep to the core social, cultural, and technological aspects of that era. This provides a familiar anchor for players, even as you switch things up, possibly in one of the following ways.

d6	History With a Twist
1	During the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, cursed burrowing creatures called nightcrawlers kidnap workers and crew bosses.
2	Wild West Shows are recruiting tools used by a secret government agency to find young, "enthusiastic" (easily motivated) people to fight in a conflict brewing in a nearby dimension ruled by intelligent moths.
3	The Gold Rush era brings a few hundred thousand people to California, but—as becomes clear eventually—if anyone gathers too much gold, shadow elves try to repatriate that gold back underground in order to prevent an ancient magical seal from shattering.
4	Bass Reeves serves as one of the first Black deputy U.S. Marshals. Helping him in his duties is a strange robotic companion with mysterious origins.
5	The gunfight at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona, is ongoing, because it's become a much larger conflict thanks to Doc Holliday's summoning of a posse of ice spirits and Billy Claiborne's introduction of hungry fire bats.
6	The Battle of Little Bighorn is in the offing, but prophetic visions reveal that Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse will lead a combined Lakota and Cheyenne force to a stunning victory. This revelation makes some U.S. military leaders press for a new, more wide-ranging, and fair treaty with Native Nations.

OVERLAPPING WEIRD HISTORICAL PERIODS

The "American Old West" is one of several distinct historical periods whose character is greatly influenced by its location. Other real-world locations offer just as many tropes, styles, stories, and character ideas, many of which would blend well in a setting that's already weird. Here are just a few options to consider.

- Privateering—pirates and other ne'er-do-wells based on a seagoing craft
- Age of Invention—inventors like Tesla, Edison, Bell, and other makers of new tech
- Victorian England—nobles, ladies and gentlemen, others of high society
- Meiji Restoration—ronin and samurai

TRADITIONAL THEMES

A theme is what your game is *about*. A theme adds a layer of complexity, allowing a player to connect with the situation on a deeper level. Themes make an extended campaign more than just a collection of events—they give it a meaning that can resonate long after everything is over.

That said, your theme might be "adventure" and that's great! We play tabletop RPGs for fun, after all. But if you do want to explore the possibility of a theme, more worldbuilding opportunities become available.

This section describes often-explored themes in westerns, which suit weird west games just as well. Each theme includes a few suggestions for how to bring it into your game.

JUSTICE AND VENGEANCE

It's a theme and a trope; someone did someone else wrong, and justice (and/or vengeance) must be served. PCs may be the ones who'll deliver said justice, but it's just as likely they'll become targets of others seeking justice and/or vengeance in turn.

Justice and vengeance themes can be introduced in several ways in your game, including the following examples. How do the characters react when faced with these situations?

d6	Cries Out for Justice/Vengeance
1	A bloodstained playing card (which turns out to be cursed) is delivered to the PCs as a challenge. It was sent by a notorious outlaw gang, some of whose members the PCs previously brought to justice.
2	The town sheriff, who has treated the PCs well, is found hanged outside of town (on an undead tree that knows the secrets of those who die on its branches).
3	A PC never found out who killed their parents, until a half-broken forgeborn mutters incriminating words about something related to the murder.
4	The PCs finally capture a hated fugitive who's wanted dead, hexed, or alive; do they pursue justice, or vengeance? If they choose vengeance, the fugitive's death curse threatens to inflict a similar fate on the PCs.
5	Bounty hunters attempt to apprehend one or more PCs, claiming the PCs are wanted for crimes of theft.
6	A PC's family member betrays the PCs, stealing something precious or ruining a promising prospect. What redress, if any, do PCs choose?

Justice or Vengeance? The line between justice and vengeance is thin as a sickle moon. Someone seeking justice could easily find themself going too far because revenge seems too sweet an opportunity to pass up. Some PCs won't care. Others may get caught up in the moment only to realize they've gone too far.

Antiheroes: PCs who don't care how far they go in wreaking vengeance might become antiheroes of a sort. Their actions might be praised by some NPCs, but most could come to view the PCs as rogue killers. Maybe you'd even like to lean into this trope for a game, if players request it. However, you should always be careful when allowing PCs to take on antihero roles; make sure that the group moves in a direction all the players consent to. Riding into town and killing everyone in the saloon just because someone the PCs had marked for vengeance happened to be present crosses a line for lots of players.

For additional information on consent and safety tools, download the free Consent in Gaming PDF at mymcg.info/consent

REDEMPTION AND RECKONING

In wide-open spaces where civilization is more of an idea than a reality, someone who's done others wrong has a chance to be better. Or at least reinvent themselves, moving far enough away from the scene of their disgrace that no one knows them or seeks to hold them accountable.

Criminals may keep their questionable deeds secret because they're in hiding. But those with dark pasts looking for some kind of personal redemption may stay quiet because they're ashamed of what they've done. Others just never see a reason to talk about what happened. Whether their past is a closely kept secret, something whispered about in saloons, or out in the open, redemption seekers are usually older and wiser than in their hotheaded days, and so work that much harder to be better or lessen their guilt.

Forgeborn, page 84

A PC's reckoning is likely to come in the form of an NPC's vengeance.

But sometimes the consequences come looking for those who've previously acted poorly. A reckoning usually doesn't care what personal strides a redemption seeker has made. It arrives like a runaway stagecoach, threatening to disrupt a character's life beyond all repair.

Themes of redemption and reckoning can be introduced in several ways in your game, including the following examples.

d6	Consequences of a Secret Past
1	One or more of the PCs was involved in a stagecoach robbery a few years ago that ended up with one or more people dead. How does the PC sit with that in the present?
2	Members of the outlaw gang the PC once ran with show up and try to murder them and/or everyone they now hold dear.
3	The PCs discover that the sheriff who they've relied on for help a few times is actually a notorious gunslinger responsible for at least one massacre several years earlier.
4	Someone appears in town who looks very much like someone a PC killed during a saloon brawl some years ago. Is it just guilt, or is it actually the victim's ghost or something else weird come back to exact a reckoning?
5	An artifact the PC carries, inherited from a parent or grandparent, is revealed to be something looted during a bloody heist. How does the PC react to the revelation?
6	To achieve their hoped-for redemption, PCs must draw upon past unsavory contacts they had hoped to never see or even think about ever again.

Alchemist, page 78

Artifacts, page 204

Weird West Artifacts, page 136

Typhoid fever: *level 4; descend one step on the damage track each day a Might defense roll is failed*

NOT REALLY A FRONTIER

The term "frontier" implies untouched, empty lands. In the real world, that wasn't actually the case in most locations, given that Indigenous peoples lived there for thousands of years before Europeans decided the land was "unclaimed" and ripe for colonization. This view dehumanized native peoples, turning them into obstacles for those who figured the land could otherwise be theirs.

Even if your weird west game is set in a historically similar but alternate reality where most of the promises and treaties made with Indigenous peoples were kept, there's still likely to be friction if PCs wax on about the "frontier."

FREEDOM AND SURVIVAL

Mostly empty places where weird west games tend to happen may seem like the epitome of freedom to some folks, giving them the excuse to do whatever they please without neighbors close enough to care or complain. Though misanthropes and outlaws are obviously drawn to underpopulated areas, so too are folks who feel stifled by overcrowded cities and whose skills don't seem well matched to making a go of it in civilized places.

But miles from the nearest town, it takes wit, preparation, and luck to survive without the support mechanisms and law enforcement that more civilized places provide when weather strikes, outlaws attack, aliens "scheme," or monstrous creatures beneath the hills awake.

Situations that embody freedom and survival are easily incorporated into your weird west tabletop RPG game, as shown by the following examples.

d6	Autonomy Versus Social Safety Net
1	An alchemist wants to hire the PCs to help them set up a laboratory far from the nearest town, where their experiments are unlikely to draw complaints for frequent explosions and other unexpected outcomes.
2	In an overreach of the law, a corrupt sheriff gathers a posse to take down people whose only crime is living on the land the sheriff wants. The PCs are asked to aid both sides; which do they choose?
3	PCs encounter a doctor who fled the cities back east and now lives under wide-open skies, sometimes providing healing for those who find them, but most of the time just sketching landscapes.
4	An outbreak of typhoid fever threatens everyone exposed, PCs included.
5	Blizzard! Driving snow and terrible creatures of ice besiege the PCs' encampment for days.
6	The PCs encounter a family of homesteaders, a group of Indigenous people, or a fragment of a shattered military cavalry in dire straits, and must decide whether to share their own vanishing supplies, or put their own survival first.

WEIRD THEMES

This section explores elements that put the "weird" in weird west settings. Each weird theme includes a few suggestions for how to bring it into your game.

MAGIC

It almost goes without saying that if you're running a weird west game, sure as shootin', magic's part of it. That might be the more traditionally understood magic of spells and spellcasters (referred to in this genre book as alchemy and alchemists, or sometimes sorcerers) or the slightly more subtle version known as magical realism that folks accept with nary a blink.

MAGIC FOUNDATION

In fact, this here genre book was written assuming magic pervades your setting. For instance, each setting option table includes several uncanny elements best described as magical in origin. The tall tales optional rule and many of the foci probably use magic to give PCs the benefits noted. Likewise, The Ghost Range setting includes all kinds of magical phenomena.

But maybe you don't want that; if so, you can translate the magic into tech.

TRANSLATING MAGIC INTO TECH

If you've determined your setting doesn't use magic, it's easy enough to translate game elements that incorporate curses, sorcery and alchemy, and demons and inscrutable powers into electronic subsystems, encrypted digital channels and nanotech, and rogue AI and silicon gods. Or not; who's to say advanced technology doesn't *already* underlie everything folks think of as "magic"? As Arthur C. Clarke said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

HORROR

Horror is commonly found in weird west settings. It's so prolific, an alternate name for the genre could be "horrific west."

One of horror's hallmarks is inscrutability and mystery. All folks can do is react to the horrific reveal, knowing they'll probably never understand what's really going on. Or at least that's the case in a movie or novel. In an RPG, it's possible PCs might gain enough of a handle on the situation that they can try to achieve closure. Even if they retain that creeping dread that the solution may not stem the monstrous entity's appetite permanently. . . .

WEIRD WEST BASELINE HORROR

As with the theme of magic, this genre book is steeped in horror. Many of the creatures presented have dreadful elements. The curses and paranormal vices optional rules both have a ghastly thread running through them. And certainly, The Ghost Range setting includes many instances that could be presented to PCs in the style of a horror film or novel.

Interested in a lot more advice for building an adventure or entire setting featuring horror? Check out Stay Alive!, *our genre sourcebook on horror.*

Weird West Setting Options, page 25

Tall Tales, page 63

Foci, page 103

The Ghost Range, page 144

Creatures and NPCs, page 76

Curses of the Weird West, page 60

Paranormal Vices of the Weird West, page 65

> **"My mistake. Four coffins."**
>
> **—The Man with No Name (played by Clint Eastwood) in *A Fistful of Dollars***

MORE HORROR OPTIONS

In addition to the horror threads already part of *High Noon at Midnight*, use the following table to help inspire additional themes of horror for your weird west game or campaign.

d20	It All Starts When. . .
1	Just after midnight, the iron hand pump out in the yard begins to pump itself.
2	A horrible growling, laughing noise sometimes echoes from somewhere beneath the outhouse.
3	Folks claim the strangers that got off the train after dark had no skin.
4	The wanted poster describes the criminal as "gnawing the bones of his still-kicking victims."
5	Someone who owns the gun becomes haunted by a presence that wants their soul.
6	Everyone who played in the poker game earlier that night begins disappearing.
7	Unholy, horrific messages begin coming in through the telegraph wire.
8	The town drunk babbles about an impossible creature creeping out of the water tank.
9	The sheriff is getting reports of night prowlers with too many eyes.
10	Something came back with the miners after they broke into a new, deeper area last night.
11	When the riders return, they discover they've acquired an extra horse with "dead" eyes.
12	The family of homesteaders is found slaughtered in their home, apparently by each other.
13	The gunslinger killed in broad daylight shows up at midnight, whispering about a rematch in Hell.
14	The killer takes victims' eyes, leaving metal spheres scribed with unholy sigils in their place.
15	The voice coming out of the hole in the ground sounds like the marshal's dead spouse.
16	The young couple just concluded an adoption, but everywhere the child goes, death follows.
17	Someone studying nearby petroglyphs is secretly committing atrocious acts while sleepwalking.
18	The old deck of cards won off a bedraggled gambler begins whispering atrocious instructions.
19	Investigation of the paddock from where the pain-wracked screams emanate reveals monsters.
20	The traveling show features wax sculptures of grinning celebrities that secretly animate and kill.

Chapter 10: Cyphers and Artifacts of the Weird West, page 123

Zeppelins, page 30

Mechanical soldier, page 341

ADVANCED AND ALIEN TECH

While not as common as magic, advanced and/or alien tech is sometimes found in weird west settings, and may go hand in hand with horror themes. (Most of the "advanced tech" described in this book comes in the form of alchemist fabrications, such as those presented in Chapter 10.)

If not alien, advanced tech might enter the setting due to intrusions by time travelers or perhaps be recovered from ruins of advanced civilizations that fell thousands of years ago and have since been forgotten.

But advanced tech could also simply be the result of a few scientists who are ahead of their time (who might be, but aren't necessarily, "mad") whose inventions get loose in the world.

Or as is the case in several extant weird west settings, the advanced tech could come in the form of steampunk devices, such as zeppelins and clockwork mechanical soldiers. Similarly, technological items might simply be anachronistic and include items such as World War I–style airplanes, motorcycles, and radios (as depicted in examples in other parts of this chapter).

Alternatively, your weird west setting might exist in the near future or science-fiction future, such as those depicted in *Westworld* or *Firefly*, respectively.

UNDERSTANDING ADVANCED AND/OR ALIEN TECH

Advanced tech—especially steampunk or science-fiction inspired tech that's integrated into the setting—could be easy to use because PCs have probably encountered it before; if not, someone around could explain how it's used, or just use it for them, such as a zeppelin pilot.

Sometimes a newly discovered object is too alien for PCs to easily understand (such as relics of the Ilu or Nihilal). When a character finds an artifact that falls into this category, they must identify it before they can use it. Identification takes from one to ten minutes and a successful Intellect roll, usually against a difficulty of 5. Identifying an object grants PCs the ability to use it.

However, without training or specialization in alien technology, advanced technology, or something similar, a character has an inability in understanding advanced and alien tech.

SELECTING WEIRD WEST TECH

Selecting weird devices for PCs to encounter depends somewhat on the story behind your setting. As previously mentioned, if your setting takes place in the future, sci-fi devices are probably encountered regularly, such as laser six-shooters instead of guns that use gunpowder and spacecraft instead of stagecoaches.

On the other hand, if remnants of a vanished civilization sometimes turn up still pulsing with strange power—is it magic? Is it tech? Does it matter?—then the devices are likely to be a lot more alien, and potentially threatening for those who don't really understand them.

Or they could just be one-off bits of technology PCs find for no apparent rhyme or reason. Maybe they find the plasma sword first, and it's only later you figure out the unique object fell through a dimensional rift leading to a world where knights who ride motorcycles fight nightmarish monsters.

Additional weird tech PCs might stumble across in your setting includes the following. It's possible the devices have some actual useful function beyond the most obvious, disturbing ones indicated.

d10	Unsettling Advanced and/or Alien Tech
1	Crystal orb surrounding lidless eye emits strange frequency that makes listeners' ears bleed.
2	Flesh-like tube that slowly attempts to envelop and "digest" anyone sleeping nearby.
3	Levitating star-shaped stone that sometimes tries to embed itself into a nearby person's skull.
4	Square of mesh cloth that wipes away features like eyes, mouths, and ears, leaving blank skin.
5	Silvery goo that takes various solid shapes when touched, including basic tools and firearms.
6	Crystal shows thoughts of the person touching it; others viewing it risk being convinced they're no longer themselves, but instead the person whose thoughts they recently witnessed.
7	Obsidian sphere the size of a small room; those touching it are transported inside to a nigh-inescapable holding cell that exists outside time.
8	Metallic device that allows flesh to pass through solid material in an unpredictable fashion.
9	Gauntlets that, once worn, can't be removed—they've eaten the wearer's hands and forearms.
10	Silvery, fractal nodule always slowly morphing into a new shape, enthralling viewers.

More ideas along these lines are provided in the next section: World Options.

Ilu, page 149

Nihilal, page 150

Inability, page 207

Interested in a lot more advice for incorporating advanced and alien tech into your setting? Check out The Stars Are Fire, *our genre sourcebook on science fiction.*

WORLD OPTIONS

The Ghost Range, page 144

Your weird west setting could take place on Earth sometime during the 1800s in the American West—in fact, that's the default assumption—but it doesn't have to. A weird west game could happen in all sorts of different places, times, or even worlds (as is the case for The Ghost Range). In fact, changing the default assumption of the game world could greatly increase the weirdness of your weird west setting.

Here are some example options for your consideration.

d10	Weird West Game World
1	*Atlantean Mesa:* Merfolk prospectors and outlaws navigate kelp forests on manta ray steeds, eking out a life beneath the watery expanse after "losing" their underwater origin city.
2	*West Mars:* On the sparsely settled Martian frontier, six-shooters fire laser rounds, water is as valuable as gold, and terraforming gangs fight for primacy.
3	*Alien Planet:* No humans here; just alien beings on an alien world wielding six-guns, wearing ten-gallon hats and dusters, and riding flying mounts that need blood to survive.
4	*Cowboys in Space:* Space cowboys move between lawless planets in a beat-up spaceship, pursuing shady deals and engaging the occasional showdown with rival outlaws.
5	*Fantasy Frontier:* A mix of the Old West and fantasy tropes means cowboy elves, magic rifles, and sheriff wizards.
6	*Simulated West:* It seems like the Old West, except it's all simulated in a computer (or, alternately, acted by robots so realistic they themselves rarely recognize that they're not actual flesh and blood).
7	*Camelot Gunslingers:* Law-sworn knights with long rifles pursue outlaw wizards, despot dragons, and malign fey beings.
8	*Steampunk Capture:* The rise of steampunk technology precludes widespread electrification and other industrial innovation, so the "weird west" continues long past a relatively short historical period into the present.
9	*Katanas and Six-Shooters:* Samurai warriors and gunslingers mix together in a world created by magic and cultural fusion.
10	*Groundhog Week:* Stuck in time, repeating the same week (or month, or year) over and over. Only the PCs and some NPCs realize the loop.

STARTING LOCATION OPTIONS

Big-picture questions are great to decide ahead of time. But when the hoof hits the trail, you need to know where your PCs will begin play. As you decide, a few questions you'll want to keep in mind include:

- Is the starting location vital to the campaign's focus, or is it just the starting point? It's fine if you don't know right away because lots of games develop organically as PCs make their choices.
- What's so interesting about the location that you want to start the game there? Aside from the location itself, maybe some instigating factor coincides with the location; see a handful of examples provided under the tables History With a Twist, Everything Was Normal, Until. . . , and Instigating Event.
- Will the starting location give PCs opportunities to learn about each other and the setting, or will that come later?

Example locations for your first game include the following. Especially specific locations (such as a saloon) might mean that PCs have some kind of association with the owner; then again, maybe that's just where the game picks up.

d20	Weird West Starting Locations
1	Gold rush (or other weird substance that's mined or gathered nearby) town
2	Big city out east, before the PCs make their way west
3	Native Nations community
4	Old gold mine that's gone quiet
5	Arid canyon haunted by ghosts
6	Saloon where the barkeep is a steampunk automaton or a forgeborn
7	Train depot; then again, could be an airship dock
8	Boomtown near dinosaur (or something. . .) fossil bed where natural philosophers flock
9	Gambling den/casino financed and run by a robber baron
10	Ghost town abandoned for unknown reasons; may still have ghosts
11	Isolated oasis in an otherwise dry and tumbleweed-strewn landscape
12	Necropolis; could be where an undead outlaw gang hides out
13	Ranch; cattle (or dinosaurs, or pig-people bred for flavor) traipse across the open range
14	Unassuming chapel somewhere outside town
15	Stagecoach, train, ship, aircar, etc. that's mid-journey to somewhere else
16	Schoolhouse out on the prairie
17	Mountain chalet with hot springs that draw visitors from afar
18	Fortified encampment encircled with standing timber
19	Strange below-ground tunnels that are thousands of years old
20	Joy house where the companions pick their customers

History with a Twist, page 12

Everything Was Normal, Until. . . , page 12

Instigating Event, page 20

Forgeborn, page 84

SADE KARONHES

WEIRD TIMELINE

Has your setting always been uncanny? And what's on the horizon for your setting? This section provides a few related ideas.

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

Maybe where the characters begin the game isn't as important as what catapults them into the setting. On the other hand, pairing an interesting location with an exciting incident is also a great method for worldbuilding, to say nothing of encounter-building. If paired with a location, what brought the PCs here? Some example options include the following.

Cursed beasts, page 79

Celebrities, page 77

Alchemist, page 78

d20	Instigating Event
1	Saw a wanted poster, and clues to the wanted figure's location led here
2	Collecting bounties on cursed beasts
3	Festival celebrating a holiday, victory, or religious event
4	Found a map leading to something valuable in the area, like a fabled lost city
5	Saw a ghost train pass by
6	Notorious gunslinger frequents the location
7	Celebrity one or more PCs wants to meet is signing there
8	Aftermath of a terrible (supernatural?) storm drove the PCs there
9	Treaty negotiations require someone to watch for funny business
10	Hired to deal with nearby bandits who threaten the place
11	All the cattle (or other ranched creatures) have gone missing
12	Spaceship crashes nearby
13	Something is eating the townsfolk
14	Famous alchemist has gone missing
15	Showdown between two notorious gunslingers is scheduled
16	Whole town mysteriously pulled into the earth
17	Mysterious illness/curse is transforming people into insectoid things
18	Renegade sheriff needs taking down
19	Someone who's done the PCs wrong is in the area
20	PCs are trapped in the area by an ancient curse and can't leave until they break it

WHAT'S NEXT

What present conflicts, if resolved, would result in a major power or paradigm shift in the setting? Will something happen that could alter the setting partway through the campaign, or by the time the campaign ends? Are you looking to end the campaign after a specific situation is concluded?

It's not necessary to decide what's next if you run your campaigns with a more free-wheeling, see-what-happens style. However, if you do plan things out a bit in advance, you can drop hints and clues for the PCs to discover during earlier games, possibly allowing them to get involved naturally and/or get out ahead of a potential bad situation.

Examples of future possibilities include most of the entries in the Instigating Events table, as well as the following.

d10	May Happen If Not Prevented
1	Important leader will be assassinated/replaced/twinned
2	Spectral locomotive doesn't blow through town like normal, but will stop to let cursed souls disembark
3	Corrupt gang of outlaws will be deputized by enchanted/possessed federal marshal
4	Moon will be drawn down from the sky (a cataclysmic event for most)
5	Entire town will be drawn into a fissure in the ground by chthonic entities
6	Magical drought will begin that promises to last decades
7	Storied outlaw who nearly caused the end of everything will return from the grave
8	God of Dreams (or a similarly powerful entity) will begin killing people in their sleep
9	New decree will require the law to round up anyone with magical ability
10	A nuclear/magical/soul-reaping apocalypse threatens everything

PERVASIVENESS OF THE WEIRD

Are the uncanny aspects of your game something every NPC (and PC) knows about and possibly even interacts with on a daily basis, or is it all hidden behind a lot of tall tales, legends, and conspiracy theories?

Whatever the level of weird pervasiveness in your game, it ties directly to relevant sections in Chapter 3: Weird West Setting Options and possibly Chapter 4: Optional Rules for the Weird West.

Here are a few example options, useful as possible worldbuilding opportunities.

d6	Weird Rarity
1	Not even the PCs believe it's real until they are introduced to the weird during the game.
2	PCs may have some skill with magic/high tech/weird stuff, but it's all tall tales to most.
3	Everyone knows about magic/high tech/weird stuff, but most people rarely encounter it.
4	The weird is part of society, but only those who study diligently or are born to it can access it.
5	Those who find/steal/craft special devices/magical talismans can access the weird.
6	The weird is widely available in the setting and almost anyone can use it to some degree.

ROLE OF THE PCs

What do the player characters do in your setting? Their origins aside, what PCs do is dictated by the kind of adventures you prepare. Usually, there's a problem of some sort in need of solving, and the PCs are the pointed end of the spear that gets things done. As time goes on, PCs may take on different roles, and it's possible that not all PCs will have the same ones.

Example options for what PCs do are as follows.

d10	PC Roles
1	Guardians of ancient lore (magic, alchemy, steampunk tech, etc.)
2	Members of a secret order that hunts demons/ghosts/escaped forgeborn/alchemists/etc.
3	Bounty hunters looking to get paid
4	Strangers in a strange land attempting to learn its weird ways and maybe eventually return home
5	On the wrong side of the law, the church, the alchemists, or another powerful group
6	PCs have jobs like regular people, but sometimes take time off to deal with weird stuff
7	Federal marshals, deputies of the town sheriff, or similar enforcers of the law
8	Pledged to keep the peace between Indigenous peoples, settlers, and strange folk
9	Hired to explore various dangerous regions (such as proscribed zones) and report back
10	Just straight-up bad seeds; outlaws who would shoot someone just to watch them die

Chapter 3: Weird West Setting Options, page 25

Chapter 4: Optional Rules for the Weird West, page 53

Strange Folk in the Wilderness, page 47

Proscribed Zones, page 150

PLOT SEEDS

Ghost rider, page 89
Zeppelin, page 30

The following plot seeds can be starting points for your weird west game. They can also be used if PCs need some extra incentive to get moving, especially if they have a choice between taking action or playing another hand of poker at the saloon.

doo	Plot Seed
1	A newspaper hires the PCs to head out west to cover a developing story. (Cursed beast sightings? The place where the world finally ends? Whatever it is, something weird.)
2	Tumbleweeds blowing into town from the south are screaming.
3	The annual rodeo is coming up soon, and at least one PC is riding. Meanwhile, other riders scheduled to participate are dropping out for various apparently unrelated reasons.
4	A ghost rider prophesizes that something horrible will soon befall the characters.
5	Justice goes astray, fingering the PCs instead of the real criminals, rendering them wanted.
6	PCs receive a telegraph message claiming to be from themselves in the future, warning of trouble.
7	Cattle rustlers have been growing bolder lately. Or maybe something's eating the missing cattle?
8	A gunslinger that apparently can't be killed by bullets is terrorizing the area.
9	A bison the size of an elephant with fur as white as snow has been sighted in the nearby hills.
10	An outlaw, looking for medicine, is driven away. They vow revenge after their mother/partner/child/weird pet perishes.
11	Unsettling "brooding cello music" drifts across town each nightt, but the musician has yet to be identified.
12	Children under the age of twelve all disappear from town one night.
13	A character's favorite gun is stolen by a renowned thief.
14	No one in town remembers what happened last Tuesday.
15	An informal shooting competition is to be held tomorrow at high noon; rumors suggest a forgeborn gunslinger who never misses will attend.
16	A mining town on the moon has gone completely silent.
17	A federal marshal names the PCs to their posse to put down a rash of undead risen from a nearby cemetery.
18	A PC discovers a hidden space beneath their family home that is a portal to the weird west.
19	The largest zeppelin ever set to sail the skies is launching on a western tour tomorrow and PCs have tickets (won them, bought them, or maybe were hired to help with security).
20	Characters awaken to discover they're sleeping rough under the open sky with no memory of how or why.
21	A player character's beloved horse goes missing.
22	A murdered child's ghost begs PCs to bring their killer to justice.
23	A traveling vaudeville show never stays long in the same place because show-goers soon find valuable possessions missing, including limbs and organs.
24	Two warring outlaw gangs both claim the same abandoned mine as their lair, but uncover a tunnel filled with mummified "bigfoots," some of which are not entirely inanimate.
25	The town sheriff tries to bribe the PCs to look the other way.
26	A storied gunslinger, bent on vengeance after their family was murdered, puts the PCs in their crosshairs, despite the fact that the PCs (presumably) had nothing to do with the crime.
27	Broken things thrown into a hole in the desert eventually return, good as new.

28 Native Nations ambassador asks to ride with the PCs to take their measure for a potential alliance.

29 A fancy dance is scheduled, and one of the PCs is asked to attend by a ghost.

30 A traveling preacher sets up a tent outside of town. Weird sounds come from it after midnight.

31 The train fails to arrive, apparently having disappeared in an orange fog somewhere along the tracks.

32 The mayor is found dead in their home missing one eye, one hand, and the left side of their brain.

33 The prairie dogs living on a nearby hill where homesteaders want to build their house are bigger than normal and seem to have a spoken language.

34 Rumor has it that a steam engine has "gone rogue" and is slowly moving down the track, destroying every town it encounters.

35 An alchemist's toy business—composed of all sorts of wind-up and steam-powered gadgets—needs help because a nest of vampires has settled into their cellar.

36 Golden coins of exotic mintage were found in the pouch of an outlaw gunned down at high noon. Some folks think the coins are cursed, others that they can be used to grant wishes.

37 They say the haunting roars echoing down the forested shoulders of the nearby mountain range are made by "wild ones" (hairy humans nearly 10 feet [3 m] tall).

38 A traveling carnival called the Kaleidoscope of Curiosities comes to town.

39 Somehow, the infamous gunslinger called Rattlesnake Jenny is back, despite being dead.

40 The cattle drive needs extra hands to protect it on a month-long trip to new grazing lands; all sorts of cursed beasts lie in wait along the way, eager for the bonanza on hooves.

41 A new "gold" rush is on for something alchemists call "bright nodes" that can only be gathered near underground magma pockets where moisture-seeking crystalline predators lair.

42 Native Nations have identified proscribed zones where horrors lurk. A hunting party or wagon train wandered into one. A reward is offered for the safe return of any (hopefully all) of its members.

43 Both candidates for town mayor were found dead with no obvious cause.

44 The Silver Slipper—known for providing companions for the night—burned down.

45 Almost everyone in town falls asleep and won't wake up; something has trapped them in a dream.

46 A cursed beast—a "dire coyote"—moves through the region followed by cultists who worship it.

47 A self-proclaimed "Wizard of Clouds" attempts to end a drought but ends up enraging wind spirits.

48 A celebrity called Calamity Jane decides she is fond of one of the PCs.

49 A talking horse is even more of a sensation because they claim to predict the future.

50 A group of self-appointed moral watchdogs—perhaps the Outlands Inquisition—arrives in town, leading to all manner of trouble.

51 A prospector finds long-buried remains later identified as the PCs' (who aren't dead... yet).

52 The PCs' friend is found dead in a spiderweb.

53 After returning from a cattle drive, one or more of the cowboys seem secretive and fatalistic.

54 A traveling huckster's "wondrous balm" is discovered to actually grant wishes—temporarily.

55 A lone ranger riders into town with a talking coyote who can drink anyone under the table.

56 A silent and apparently deserted—and probably haunted—zeppelin appears above town.

57 The telegraph operator begins receiving horrifying, disturbing messages from "Hell."

58 A prospector carts a statue into town they stole from a proscribed zone.

59 Shimmering dust blows into the area. Where it lands, otherworldly plants and animals spring up.

60 Wanted signs take on origami-like form and begin to wreak havoc in town.

61 A child is born with two heads and the ability to speak several languages.

62 The mayor installs an "automatic justice" machine of unknown provenance in place of a sheriff.

63 After a meteor shower, a handful of townsfolk's eyes glow and they develop psychic powers.

64 Someone claiming to be the second coming of a storied religious figure shows up in town.

65 The poker tournament heats up, leading to tense moments at and away from the game table.

66 The traveling orchestral quartet is much sought, but after they move on, thefts come to light.

67 An outlaw whose prosthetic heart audibly ticks is active hereabouts.

68 A message arrives asking the PCs to meet a stranger when it's "high noon at midnight."

69 A rancher claims their cattle are being murdered by a "flick" of jackalopes.

70 Strangers riding two-wheeled machines that roar and belch steam race into town.

71 Cowboys with glass bodies sometimes come into the saloon to relish cigars and play poker.

72 Whenever the PCs ride out, vultures appear high above them, lazily circling as if waiting.

73 When the stagecoach arrives, its driver and passengers are dead, burnt to charcoal.

74 A PC receives an inheritance that includes a "mansion" out west and a demon pistol.

A rogue steam engine might be a locomotem.

Locomotem, page 84

Alchemist, page 78

Vampire, page 362

Dire coyote, page 80

Celebrities, page 77

Outlands Inquisition, page 36

Jackalope, page 79

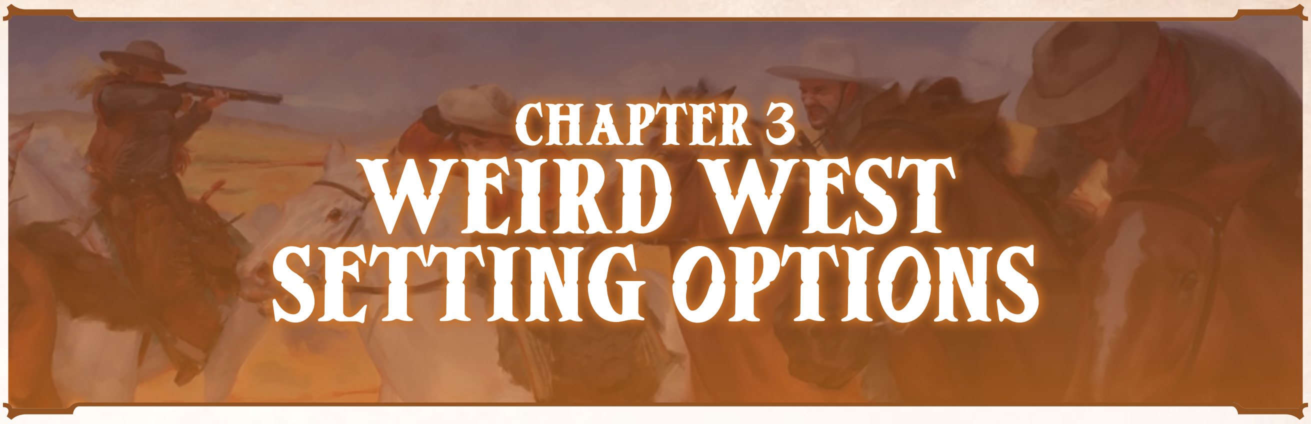
Vampires, Cypher System Bestiary, page 62

75	Aliens claiming to be from a distant star send an embassy asking for alliance.
76	A hive of blaze ants erupts from someone's cellar, threatening the entire town.
77	People settling near a "haunted valley" gradually change, growing in height, gaining in intelligence, developing scales, and eventually losing interest in human concerns in favor of inexplicable ones.
78	Federal marshals ride into town, tracking a "runaway robot" that deserted its post.
79	Floodwaters are rising; if that wasn't destructive enough, the waters hide tentacled things.
80	The dust that sometimes sifts down onto the surrounding plains after midnight is magical.
81	A powerful psychic, on the run from authorities and demons, secretly takes up residence in town.
82	Every full moon, town residents bar themselves inside all night (because they're werewolves).
83	Seeking shelter during a storm, PCs stumble into a ranch apparently completely run by children.
84	Bank robbers wearing garments sewn from harvested human skin fled west into the desert.
85	"Doctor Good," a rare elixir sold by an alchemist, is said to erase consequences of bad luck.
86	Strangers save the PCs. Later, PCs learn the strangers are notorious, wanted outlaws.
87	According to gossip, the pastor keeps an angel in a bottle somewhere in the town church.
88	Stories about the PCs begin cropping up, often casting the PCs in a questionable light.
89	Strangely clad strangers calling themselves templars build a compound out in the desert.
90	The mariachi band plays delightfully and metes out justice to the outlaws that they encounter.
91	A demonic patron is willing to stake people for poker games, but claims their souls as collateral.
92	Flocks of flying pigs have been sighted winging south.
93	Blazing blue fire sometimes engulfs the entire joy house, but afterward everyone seems fine.
94	An accused murderer wants the PCs to help them interrogate the victim's ghost to clear their name.
95	A gunslinger renowned in tall tales is found murdered after playing poker with the PCs.
96	The resource around which the town was built is exhausted and society begins unraveling.
97	PCs are blackmailed; if they don't rob a train for a magical relic, their secrets will be revealed.
98	The earth swallows the saloon, though the patrons' screams can still be heard faintly.
99	Grim-faced sorcerers in wide-brimmed hats eradicate the constabulary with death spells.
00	One or more PCs wake up with their brains implanted in forgeborn bodies.

Demon pistol, page 137

Blaze ant: *level 4; bite deals damage and burns for 1 damage each round until action is used to put out the flame*

Joy house is another name for bordello or brothel.



CHAPTER 3

WEIRD WEST SETTING OPTIONS

The previous two chapters—The Weird West and Building Your Weird West Setting—provide a wealth of story ideas, plot seeds, and other tools to help you start your own weird west game. This chapter helps you further solidify your direction by providing several "ingredients" you can choose from to help bring it to life.

Some GMs prefer to grow their campaigns a little at a time, beginning by running a starting adventure for their players, then more and more based on what happened in the previous scenarios, slowly filling in larger and larger areas. This works especially well for GMs who want to run only a few one-shot adventures in the weird west. If that's you, the plot seeds provided in the last chapter provide lots of options, as do the complete adventures and Cypher Shorts presented in Part 4.

The setting options in this chapter include a wild west lexicon, travel options, important groups and locations, and much more, all with "weird" twist options. Additional setting options include magic, horror, advanced tech, and other uncanny things you might want to include in your setting.

Chapter 1: The Weird West, page 6

Chapter 2: Building Your Weird West Setting, page 9

Plot seeds, page 22

Part 4: Adventures in the Weird West, page 179

MAJOR TOPICS

This chapter covers several setting options. For your convenience, they're listed here with page numbers.

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WESTERN LEXICON

This weird west lexicon is a collection of words and phrases NPCs in your setting might use to enhance the western nature of your setting. But be careful, pilgrim; a little western vernacular goes a long way.

You either already have—or can easily assemble—a "cowboy dictionary" from watching and reading westerns or searching the internet. The following section is a relatively small sampling of just a few interesting terms that a PC or NPC might use in a game.

Ace in the hole: Secret advantage, such as a hidden gun.
Apple jack: Liquor distilled from cider.
Atwixt: Between.
Bag of nails: Everything confused.
Balderdash: Foolish nonsense.
Ballyhoo: Exaggerated talk or unbelievable claims.
Bar dog: A bartender.
Bee in your bonnet: Having something important to say/having an idea.
Bend the elbow: To drink whiskey.
Bone orchard: A cemetery.
Boston dollar: A penny.
Brand: Mark of ownership applied to livestock.
Bronco/Bronc: An animal never trained for riding or for harness.
Bury the hatchet: To achieve peace.
Bushwhack: An ambush.
Cardsharp: Someone who earns a living playing cards, and possibly a cheat. (Note that this is a general term and not exactly synonymous with a Cardsharp who has a paranormal vice, as described in Chapter 4.)
Chaw: To chew.
Chock-full: Overflowing.
Crazier than a shithouse rat: Dangerous, unpredictable, and dirty.
Daisy: The best.
Dead as a doornail: Really, truly dead.
Die with my boots on: Die actively engaged in life (perhaps in gunfight), not of old age/illness.
Done up: Ruined by riotous living.
Dusted: Thrown from a horse.
Feller: Fellow.
Fiddle-faddle: Foolish talk.
Fixin' to: An intention or plan.
Fleabag: A bedroll.
Get the bulge on: Gaining an advantage, such as getting a winning hand or drawing quicker in a duel.
Going heeled: Carrying a gun.
Greased weasel on a hot tin roof: Fast and hard to catch; dangerous.
Hang up their rope: Quit an important job.
Hankerin': Wanting.
Hell's coming with me: Violent retaliation is coming.
High-line rider: An outlaw.
Hog leg: Long-barreled, large-caliber pistol.
I'm your huckleberry: I'm who you're looking for.
In cahoots: A partnership.
In liquor: Drunk.
Jawing: Talking.
Less'n: Unless.
Lunger: Someone suffering from tuberculosis.
Monte: A gambling card game.
More than you can shake a stick at: An overabundance or something too big to be counted.
Mosey: A leisurely stroll.
Necktie social: A hanging.
Off my feed: Not hungry.
Paint the town red: Celebrate, often with heavy drinking and smoking.
Partner: Friendly term for a just-met stranger.
Pilgrim: Novice, or someone whose ideas might be unrealistic.
Pop skull: Whiskey.
Prayer book: Cigarette rolling papers.
Push your barrow: Leave.
Reckon: Expressing a belief/opinion.
Riotous living: Life mostly concerned with card tables, drinking, smoking, and unsafe sex.
Rootin'-tootin': Lively and enthusiastic.
Run your mouth: Speaking out of turn or saying foolish things.
Rustlers: Livestock thieves.
Shootin' iron: Pistol.
Skin a smoke wagon: Draw a pistol (specifically a single-action revolver).
Varmints: Troublemakers (derogatory).
Vittles: Food.
Washing out the canyon: A bath.
Well, I'll be John Brown: Speaker suspects they'll be damned or hanged (or just surprised).

GM NOTE: A LITTLE WEIRD GOES A LONG WAY

While there are a lot of weird ideas presented for your weird west town in this chapter, we don't mean to suggest that every place in town is crawling with all or even any of these bizarre details. A given location may have only a single oddity, or none at all. Likewise, some weird options may just not fit the setting you've built. These ideas are meant as inspiration, not items meant to be studiously checked off a list.

TRAVELING THE WEIRD WEST

Weird west modes of travel range from the mundane to the incredible. Your setting might include only the most historically accurate options, one or two uncanny possibilities for those most in the know, or almost every strange option described in this section.

HORSES AND ALTERNATE MOUNTS

Nearly synonymous with the West, horses serve as beasts of burden, transportation, and often loyal companions where roads and even trails are few and far between.

Standard horses fit for riding can be purchased at livery stables and ranches, usually for a very expensive cost, or probably from some down-on-their-luck gamblers in a boomtown saloon for a lot less.

Riding horse: *level 3; moves a long distance each round*

Very expensive, page 118

Uncanny Saloons, page 40

Tack: Unless acquired through unusual means, a horse or other mount comes standard with "tack." Also called saddlery, tack includes a saddle (with stirrups and associated gear) and a bridle. Weird west characters know how to use tack.

Riding: As part of their knowledge of how to use tack, weird west characters also know the basics of riding (they're practiced in it), assuming the characters are riding mounts trained to be ridden. (Strictly speaking, the Cypher System assumes everyone is practiced in most skills unless they're trained or have an inability, so pointing this out isn't meant to grant weird west PCs additional abilities, but rather to put a spotlight on a particular skill likely to see more use than in other games.)

MOUNT NAMES

NPCs usually appreciate their horses (or alternate mount) and call them by name, such as:

Captain, Cash, Brandy, Cinnamon, Queen, Clyde, Rio, Spirit, Pepper, Snowball, Jigsaw, Scout, Bolt, Fargo, Trigger, Champ, Boots, Major, King, Sonny, Odie, Bandit, Cookie, Lady, Angel, Fancy, Ace

Loyal Mount (Optional Rule): Some PCs may be interested in the option of exchanging one of their tier 3 or higher type abilities or focus abilities they'd normally gain with the Mount ability instead. Alternatively, PCs who want the Mount ability in addition to their regular abilities can pay 4 XP in lieu of gaining a new skill when they advance to tier 3 or higher.

Riding, page 229

Mount, page 164

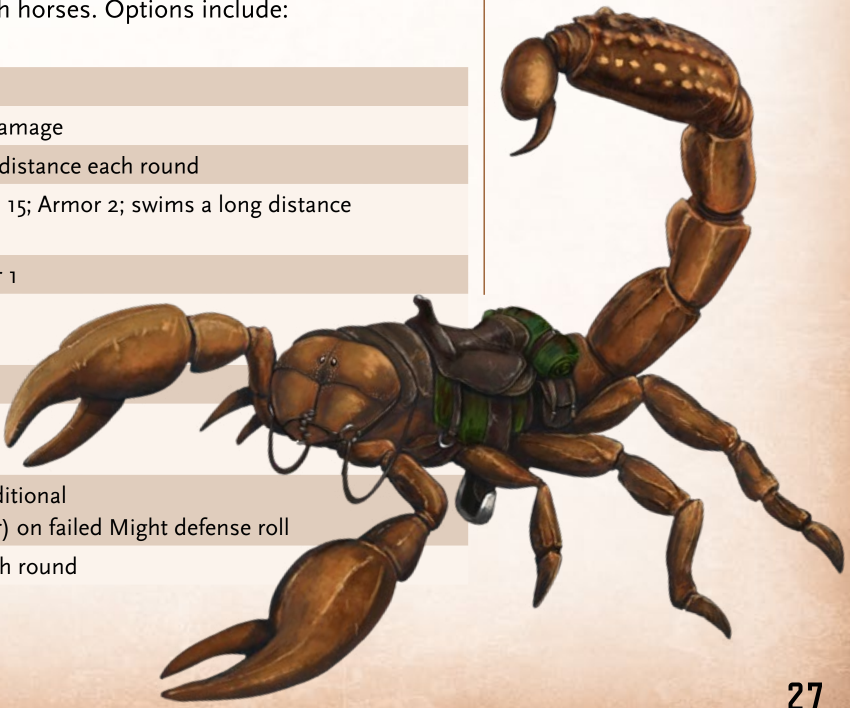
Advancing characters, page 240

If the setting treats alternate mounts as "normal," the price a PC might pay to get one would be the same as for a horse in another setting—very expensive.

ALTERNATE ANIMAL

Some other beasts could replace or serve in addition to horses in your setting, outfitted with all the tack normally associated with horses. Options include:

d10	Mount	Stats
1	Elephant	Level 5; health 20; Armor 1
2	Water buffalo	Level 4; horns deal 5 points of damage
3	Crocodile	Level 4; Armor 1; swims a short distance each round
4	Shark	Level 3, attacks as level 4; health 15; Armor 2; swims a long distance each round
5	Lion/Tiger	Level 5, attacks as level 6; Armor 1
6	Ostrich	Level 3; moves a long distance each round
7	Stegosaurus	Level 4; Armor 3
8	Giant bat	Level 3; flies a long distance each round
9	Giant scorpion	Level 3; poison stinger deals additional 3 Speed damage (ignores Armor) on failed Might defense roll
10	Pterosaur	Level 4; flies a long distance each round



If the setting includes magical mounts as "normal," the price a PC might pay to get one would be the same as for a horse in another setting—very expensive.

MAGICAL MOUNTS

Creatures straight out of a fantasy or fairy tale setting could serve the same role as horses in your setting (or in addition to horses and alternate animals), outfitted with all the tack normally associated with horses. Options include:

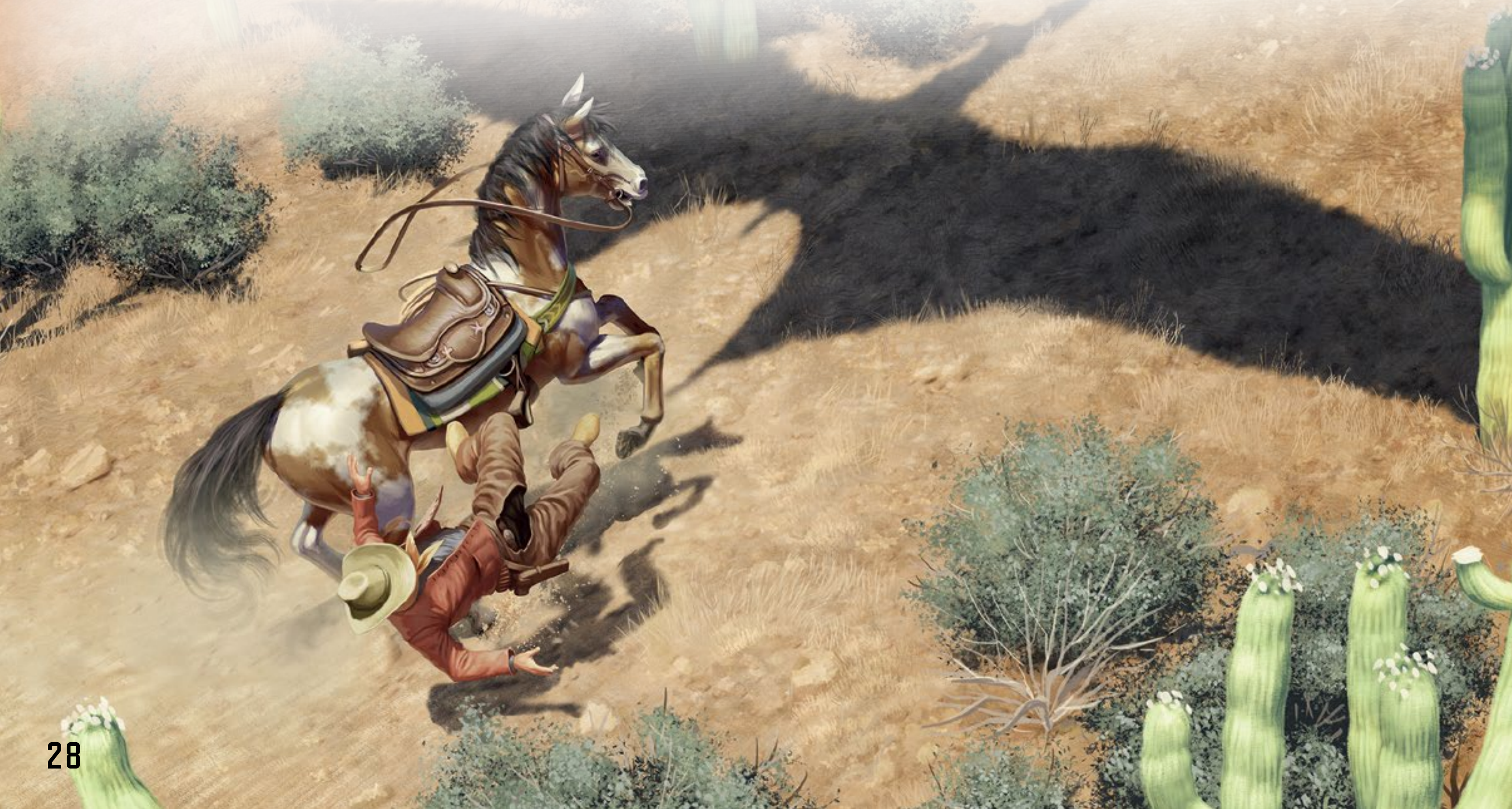
d10	Mount	Stats
1	Ogre	Level 4; health 20; Armor 1
2	Giant rabbit	Level 3; burrows a short distance each round
3	Ice beetle	Level 4; Armor 2; attack also dazes target with cold for 1 round
4	Skeletal horse	Level 3; flies a short distance each round; glare attack stuns for 1 round
5	Griffon	Level 4, perception as level 5; Armor 1; flies a long distance each round
6	Giant spider	Level 3; health 12; deal additional 3 points of Speed damage from poison
7	Dragonling	Level 5, attacks as level 6; Armor 2; flies a long distance each round
8	Cactus, animate	Level 4; short-range spines attack
9	Fleshmare	Level 4; fleshmare moves a long distance each round
10	Hellfire steed	Level 5; health 21; Armor 1 (10 against fire); see full hellfire steed entry

Fleshmare, page 84

Hellfire steed, page 82

GM INTRUSIONS FOR WEIRD WEST MOUNTS

- Mount is startled and throws character to the ground, then runs off.
- Mount loses a horseshoe (or similar); mount travels half as far each day until issue is fixed.
- Mount starts limping; mount's health continues to degrade until after a few days of rest.
- A flash flood/windstorm means mount must be led to safety/shelter.
- Sinkhole opens up below mount, threatening to suck it and rider under.
- Mount is killed/destroyed (or just severely hurt) by a freak lightning strike, or a stray bullet if in combat.
- Rustlers try to make off with the PCs' mounts in the dead of night.
- New to the jouncing gait of their mount, the character becomes nauseated.
- On the road too long, the character must succeed on a Might defense roll or become dazed from exhaustion until they enjoy a full ten-hour rest and recovery.
- Character dismounts to gather wood, wash up, or relieve themself. Unfortunately, some landscape feature turns them around so they get lost and can't immediately find their mount again.



ADVANCED TECH MOUNTS AND PERSONAL TRANSPORT

Mounts and other forms of personal transport normally found in a contemporary or sci-fi setting could serve the same role as horses in your setting (or in addition to horses, alternate animals, and magical mounts). Advanced tech mounts might not require all the tack normally associated with horses, though you might decide otherwise. Options include:

d10	Mount/ Transport	Stats
1	Robot steed	Level 3; Armor 2; moves a long distance each round
2	Hovercycle	Level 3; moves a long distance each round, ignoring difficult terrain/water
3	Jet pack	Level 3; flies a long distance each round
4	Mechanical spider	Level 3; Armor 1; moves and climbs a long distance each round
5	Rocket boots	Level 3; jumps a long distance each round
6	Hoverboard	Level 2; moves a long distance each round, ignoring difficult terrain/water
7	Gene-tweaked amoeba	Level 4; moves and climbs a long distance each round
8	Web-shooters	Level 3; “flies” a long distance each round
9	Portal gloves	Level 4; transports user up to a long distance each round
10	Motorcycle	Level 3; Armor 1; moves a long distance each round

COACHES AND VEHICLES

Basic western staples of transport include horse-drawn wagons and coaches. These rely on some kind of trail, or at least level-enough ground that a trail can be broken. They can be purchased or traded for in most communities, with outfitters and suppliers available in larger cities and boomtowns alike.

WEIRD GROUND VEHICLES

Unusual, magical, or high-tech vehicles could serve the same role as wagons and coaches in your setting. Options include:

d6	Vehicle	Stats
1	Motor carriage	Level 3; carries about 1,000 lbs. (450 kg) a long distance each round
2	Giant snail	Level 4; carries about 1,000 lbs. (450 kg) a short distance (even up vertical surfaces) each round
3	Dune buggy	Level 3; carries up to four passengers a long distance each round
4	Sandworm	Level 5; carries dozens of passengers a long distance each round
5	Shadow bus	Level 4; carries dozens of passengers through dark “shortcuts” across the land
6	Motorized mole	Level 5; carries about 1,000 lbs. (450 kg) a short distance (even through solid earth or stone) each round

GM INTRUSIONS FOR GENERAL WEIRD WEST TRAVEL

- Vehicle runs out of coal, gas, electricity, magic, souls, or other power source and must be refueled.
- Weird fog lies across the intended path; attempts to pass through it cause victims to lose their way and risk falling into a canyon on failed defense rolls.
- Somehow, the PCs have gotten lost.
- One PC is accidentally left behind somewhere back along the way; their absence is discovered hours later.
- Travel is interrupted by a deadshot who thinks one of the PCs owes them a favor.
- Mold, insects, or low-level curse renders the food and/or water supply for the journey inedible and/or undrinkable.
- Character is thrown from vehicle (or mount) by a jolt, startled mount, or similar accident, risking a broken bone.
- Weird blue smoke rises into the sky a little ways off the intended direction of travel, inviting investigation.
- Scout or guide disappears; the way forward is no longer easy to determine.

Wagon: *level 2; carries about 1,000 lbs. (450 kg) of cargo if hitched to a mount trained to pull*

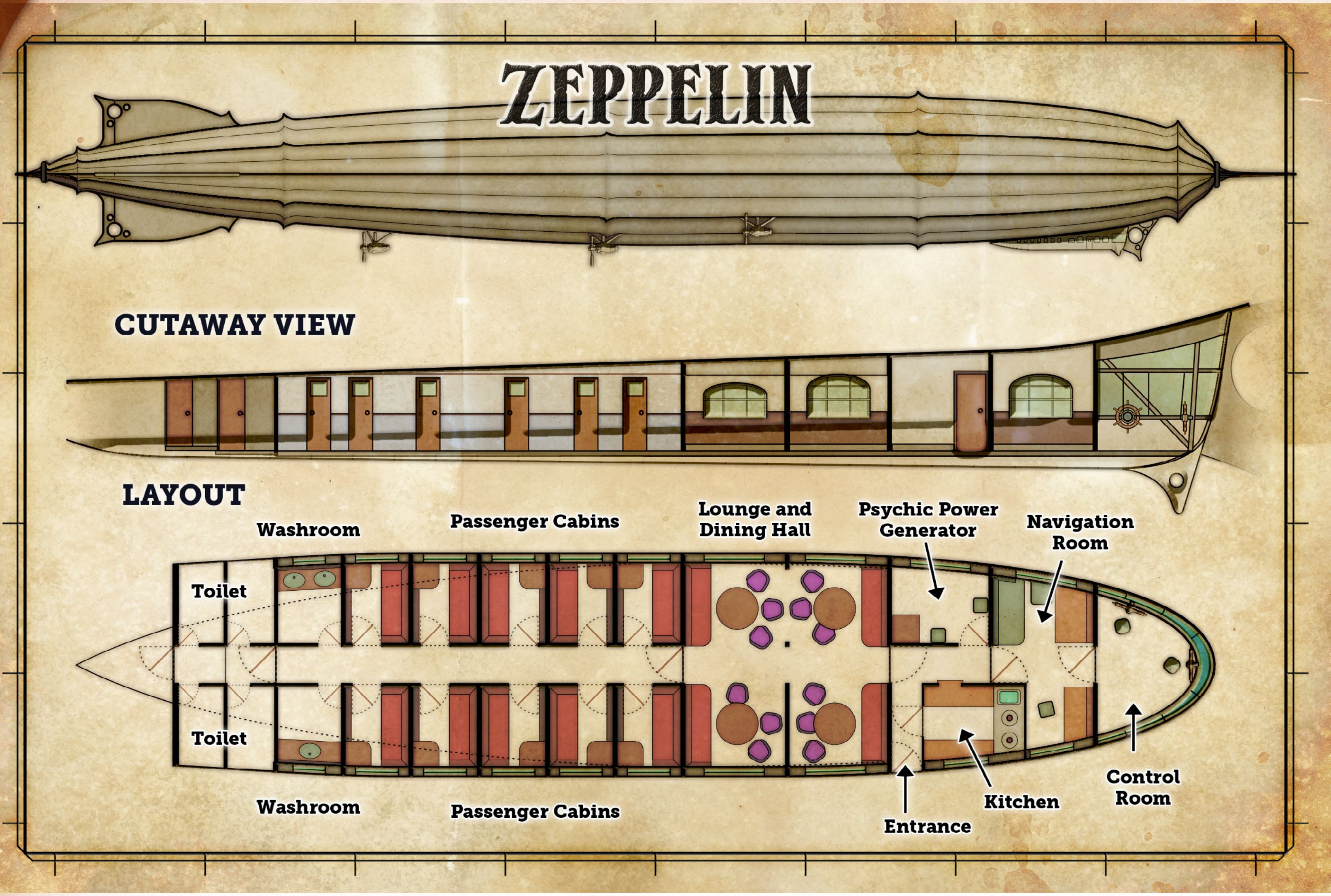
Coach: *level 3; carries six people inside and two outside if hitched to a mount trained to pull*

Tack, page 27

If the setting includes tech mounts as “normal,” the price a PC might pay to get one would be the same as for a horse in another setting—very expensive.

PCs could expect to pay an inexpensive to moderate amount to ride a service using a weird ground vehicle, or a very expensive to exorbitant price to purchase one for themselves.

Deadshot, page 87


ZEPPELIN
CUTAWAY VIEW
LAYOUT
Washroom
Passenger Cabins
Lounge and Dining Hall
Psychic Power Generator
Navigation Room
Toilet
Toilet
Washroom
Passenger Cabins
Entrance
Kitchen
Control Room

PCs could expect to pay moderate to expensive amount to ride a service using a weird air vehicle, or an exorbitant price to purchase one for themselves.

WEIRD AIR VEHICLES

Unusual, magical, or high-tech air vehicles could replace mundane transport and weird ground vehicles in your setting, or serve in addition to both.

Some of these options might run according to a certain schedule (like the zeppelin), some rarely or sporadically, and others only under special circumstances (such as after completing a requisite ritual to summon it).

Options include:

d6	Vehicle	Stats
1	Balloon	Level 3; carries six passengers a short distance each round as wind blows
2	Air whale	Level 6; carries dozens of passengers in gondola a long distance each round
3	Sopwith Camel	Level 3; carries pilot a long distance each round; pilot can make a long-range machine gun attack dealing 6 points of damage each round
4	Demon pane	Level 5; flying chunk of obsidian carries seven passengers a long distance each round but inevitable that one passenger will fall off during any given trip
5	Solid cloud	Level 3; carries dozens of passengers a long distance each round
6	Zeppelin	Level 5; carries ten passengers in gondola a long distance each round

TRAINS

Engines steaming down the rails as they race between towns and distant regions might be a staple of your weird west setting. Hear the whistle blow? All aboard!

Standard steam engines and the cars they pull carry resources, passengers, and sometimes military forces great distances, allowing faster communication, movement of goods, and relocation of people to places where the tracks pass.

Steam engine: *level 5; moves a long distance each round; pulls a dozen or more cars*

Rail Construction: Sometimes there's only the promise of future trains implied by work gangs laying down tracks through a region. Under ideal conditions, up to 4 miles (6 km) of track can be laid in a day. Mountainous terrain reduces that speed to just a couple of hundred feet a day, and intervening rivers and canyons requiring bridges can slow down track extension by months. Other factors—like material for building, labor, resistance by those who'd rather not see a train blow through, and weather—can also slow or stop track extension.

In a weird west setting where access to magic and/or advanced technologies exist, rail construction can be helped (or sometimes slowed) by one or more of the following possibilities:

- Forgeborn with steam-powered drills for arms help extend tunnels.
- Zombie labor; generally work without complaint unless they get the scent of the living.
- Rail fabricator; just add rocks and dirt at one end, and finished lengths of rail are extruded from the other side.
- Criminals juiced up on strength potions that only function while imbiber lays rail.
- Train's onboard rail workers are constantly laying down tracks ahead of the train and pulling it back up again after the train has passed by.

Riding the Rails: A ticket to ride is inexpensive if moving between neighboring towns, but if moving between territories, crossing an entire continent, or traveling someplace even stranger, the cost can increase into the very expensive range.

Inexpensive item, page 118

Class of service also plays into a ticket's price. Passengers without much money can ride "coach," characterized by dusty benches and cramped quarters. But those with first-class tickets (a very expensive item) enjoy luxury accommodations and amenities such as the following:

- Cabins with plush bedding, upholstered furniture, and a personal forgeborn butler.
- Observation car that detaches and rises above the train, pulled aloft by great metallic wings.
- Dining car elaborately decorated and staffed, serving repasts that magically keep diners from feeling too full.
- Smoking car where cigars can be indulged and, often enough, a swirling spirit of storytelling (a yarnspinner) manifests and entertains with amazing tales.

Forgeborn butler: *level 2*

Yarnspinner: *level 4, entertainment and illusions as level 6; takes only 1 damage from successful nonmagical attacks*

ALTERNATE ENGINE

Traditional trains burned coal (or wood, in wooded areas) to power steam engines. Those might exist in your game, as well as one or more of the following options for a special kind of train.

d6	Power Source	Notes
1	Nuclear	Engineer wears a radiation suit
2	Captive dragon	The engine is fed sheep instead of coal
3	Electricity	Relies on charge running through tracks
4	Locomotem	The locomotem carries up to four passengers just by itself
5	Fairy dust	Requires annual renewal of contract with fey entities
6	Possession	Secondary passenger possessions possible without adequate warding

Locomotem, page 84

WHAT'S ON THE TRAIN

When the train pulls into the station, what's weird about it and/or who gets off?

d6	Weird Train Situation
1	No one gets off because the passengers are frozen solid, and train is still stick-to-your-flesh cold
2	A flood of ghosts disembark, most of which fade away, except for a few malignancies
3	It's the 10:17, which folk know to avoid; otherwise the vampire gunslinger who disembarks from the farthest car—a car full of grave dirt and bones—may come after them
4	No one gets off because the passengers are smothered in a transparent block of living digestive gel
5	Thousands of hungry spiders swarm off the train; mama spider, cocooned passengers, and more eggs are still on the train
6	Circus train with all manner of unbelievable attractions, including a faceless ringmaster who can speak directly mind-to-mind

GM INTRUSIONS FOR TRAIN TRAVEL

- During a train stop, train leaves without the character.
- Character realizes another passenger on the train is actually demon-possessed.
- Sorcerous outlaws create the illusion of bridge having collapsed so they can rob the stopped train.
- The train ends up someplace unexpected, like a town that appears on no map.
- Power source for train (fire elemental or similar entity) gets loose and attacks passengers.
- The car is haunted by a ghost whose unfinished business requires they go someplace the train doesn't.

Demon, page 322

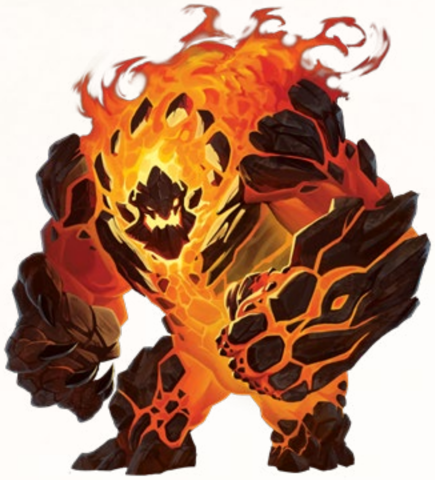
Demon, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 54*

Fire elemental, page 326

Fire elemental, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 23*

Ghost, page 331

Ghost, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 44*



IMPORTANT WEIRD WEST GROUPS

All kinds of organizations, agencies, Native Nations, and factions are potentially found in a weird western setting. Your setting might include mostly historically accurate options, but if you've got your mind set on adding a few unexpected twists to those groups, read on.

THE LAW

The law comes in many flavors, and is authorized by a higher power: by courts, in the case of federal marshals; by town assemblies when it comes to sheriffs; by a Native Nations leader, council, or similar body who empowers envoys according to their specific tradition; and by their own decree when it comes to "rangers" roaming the region fighting corruption and chasing outlaws.

That said, actual higher powers—in the form of angels, demon lords, or demigods, as claimed by the Outlands Inquisition—could literally authorize law keepers.

Whatever their official title, "lawmen" are driven by a dream of justice, enforcing what's right on the untamed, perhaps demon-haunted landscape.

Law keepers sometimes ride into a troubled area alone, intent on cleaning up a problem single-handedly, relying on their fast draw in any shootouts that arise. Others prefer teamwork, possibly asking PCs for aid, as noted hereafter.

For some representatives of the law, the line between right and wrong isn't as important as whether they succeed in their larger task. Most enforcing the law focus on outlaws, which could be rogue gunslingers but then again could be ghosts, demons, or some cursed beast that is troubling a community. Or a combination of these.

Gunslinger, page 87

Outlands Inquisition, page 36

Lawman, page 87

Despite their name, a fair share of lawmen are women and nonbinary folks.

THE LAW PURSUING THE CHARACTERS

PCs could end up on the wrong side of the law for all kinds of reasons—past criminal behavior, illegalities committed in pursuit of a noble cause, or because they are falsely implicated. When that happens, the PCs could experience one or more of the following weird situations—initially introduced as a GM intrusion—as the law tries to find and punish them.

- Wanted posters appear with images of one or more of the PCs; if a poster "sees" a PC within immediate range of it, it begins to scream and shout that it has found the criminal.
- A "seeking bullet" whistles out of the night (fired from who knows how many miles away), striking a PC wanted by the law who fails a difficulty 5 Speed defense roll. The bullet deals 5 points of damage and, on a failed Intellect defense roll, wanted posters with the character's name and crime materialize in the presence of the PC, drifting down like snow or swirling in their wake for about ten minutes.
- A representative of the law rides into town using a dowsing rod to locate the characters. They challenge the characters to a showdown if the PCs don't give themselves up. If the PCs escalate, the law does the same, gathering a local posse.
- PCs who give themselves up or are otherwise caught and jailed see that their cell is covered in all manner of graffiti from previous occupants. PCs who take the time to study it may learn a secret or two, such as a clue to buried money from a bank robbery, how to get past the ghost guarding the buried money, and/or that the sheriff in town is actually a shapeshifting werewolf who killed the bank robber because they wanted the stolen bank treasure for themself.
- Jailed PCs may be offered bond by a bondsperson who appears in their dream at a dark crossroads. The figure offers the PCs a monetary bail bond or guaranteed freedom; all they need to provide for the latter is a sacrificial soul (which doesn't have to be their own).

GATHERING A POSSE

Instead of looking to corral outlaw PCs, the law might want the PCs to join a posse to bring some other criminal to justice.

PCs may be motivated to join based on their own experience with the criminal sought. But even if not, those sworn in as part of a group organized by the law can expect some kind of payment equal to a moderately priced item, a split of any bounty offered on the criminal (each share equal to an expensive item), and/or just having their ammunition supplied.

Price categories, page 202

Dowsing rod: *level 5; if the user has obtained a personal belonging of their named quarry, the dowsing rod points in the direction of the quarry for one hour; depletion: 1 in 1d10*

Town Jail and Sheriff's Office, page 42

Werewolf, page 367

Werewolf, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 65*

WHO'S WANTED?

Options for reasons the PCs might be asked to join a posse include the following.

d10	Who's Wanted?
1	*Argent Alchemist:* Former customers usually end up dead within a month. Turns out the Argent Alchemist's goods "wake up" in the middle of the night, kill their owners, and make off with any treasure.
2	*Bandits of Steam and Flesh:* A group of three outlaws outfitted with painful-looking steam-powered prosthetics are robbing trains and stagecoaches passing nearby.
3	*Ghosts of a Kind:* Four gamblers, who killed each other over an argument at the card table, have taken over the saloon and need to be exorcised.
4	*Cactus Rustlers:* A group of bandits has been stealing prize cacti from a nearby ranch where the flowers are normally collected and used for all manner of alchemical and/or industrial needs.
5	*Stardust Thieves:* A huge supply of stardust was hijacked from a steam train heading east by a mismatched group of masked strange folk.
6	*Masked Shadow:* Someone wearing what appears to be clothing, a hat, and a mask made of shadows walked bold as you please into the general store, killed the owner, and made off with whatever the owner had in their basement vault. (Money? Artifacts? The bones of the Prophesied Walker?)
7	*Clock Jumpers:* A gang of thieves has an ancient artifact allowing them to jump back in time if their bank robbery fails and try again. They've used it several times, and the timeline is fraying.
8	*Skeleton Riders:* Undead on skeletal horses are raiding the town, perhaps because they enjoy bringing death, or possibly to cause everyone in town to leave.
9	*Mesa Monster:* A many-armed, many-headed reptilian beast has woken below the mesa. Ravenous, it hunts all night, and then returns to its subterranean den by day to feed and rest.
10	*Bloodfused Desperado:* An outlaw who can't be killed by normal means is running roughshod over the region, harming innocents, thieving, and killing any members of the law that get in his way. Word is, he is just a volume of animate blood, and takes the blood of his victims to replenish his form.

Stardust and Dustfalls, page 147

Strange Folk in the Wilderness, page 47

Prophesied Walker, page 166

Lawman, page 87

The Secret Service and Pinkerton Agency described herein deviate wildly from actual history.

Secret Service agent: *level 3, disguise and stealth as level 5*

Badge, ensorcelled: *level 6*

WEIRD WEST LAW-KEEPING GROUPS

Besides lawmen personified by town sheriffs, wide-roaming federal marshals, Texas rangers, and lone vigilantes, your weird west setting might include one or more of the following options. PCs could be part of one of these organizations, allied with a single member of one of these groups, encounter one of these organizations during the course of an adventure, or find themselves butting heads with the same.

Secret Service: Besides protecting the commander in chief, the Secret Service is also responsible for safeguarding other important figures from assassination attempts and combating criminal organizations using advanced technology (and/or magic) that could disrupt national security.

Operating clandestinely, Secret Service agents work undercover (pretending to be ranch hands, circus performers, prospectors, gravediggers, etc.), rarely revealing who they are and that they're actually employed and trained by the government.

Individual agents are sometimes equipped with instances of advanced technology (and/or magic) to help them complete their tasks, depending on their current mission. For instance, even if working undercover, Secret Service agents carry a badge ensorcelled to appear as a playing card to anyone casually looking at it (unless the badge owner wishes them to see its true appearance). Moreover, the badge wearer can use it to talk with other members covertly.

Pinkerton Rail Agency: This organization is primarily charged with protecting trains and going after those suspected of train theft. The Pinkertons' authority is derived from contracts with railroad companies (though it sometimes subcontracts with rich and/or politically connected individuals or organizations moving valuable goods or important people by rail).

The Pinkertons' headquarters span five railway cars that are always on the move. The cars sometimes travel together, but are more often scattered across different trains to extend their coverage. Any given Pinkerton rail car contains about five Pinkerton agents as well as a rooftop-mounted machine gun emplacement—normally hidden beneath a façade—able to throw serious firepower downrange.

Dawn Rangers: Focusing on containing threats posed by the undead, the Dawn Rangers are a somewhat arrogant clan, certain their priorities override any local jurisdiction. Most times, folks are happy to let them do what they want, given that the Dawn Rangers are usually nipping zombie plagues before they go viral; rooting out secret vampire nests; finding and burning lich phylacteries; and, as happened that one time, amassing an army against the cataclysmic undead kaiju that jumped down from the second moon (known by some as the Tomb Moon).

Most Dawn Ranger riders wear a distinctive badge featuring an RIP-inscribed grave. They are most known for their dawn panoply, which includes glowing duster, gloves, and wide-brimmed hat. The panoply grants a Dawn Ranger additional protections and offensive abilities especially effective against undead.

Ghost Range Marshals: This self-selected group of justiciars roam The Ghost Range and its edges (sometimes called The Outer Range).

OUTLAWS

Sometimes no-good, spiteful bastards mosey into town. Most are just bullies who won't amount to a hill of beans. What distinguishes a mean drunk from a serious outlaw is how wily, quick-shootin', and lucky they are—and for those looking to make a go of a criminal career, how capable they are of leading a gang that won't abandon them at the first sign of trouble.

Several options for creating weird west outlaw gangs follow, plus a couple of sample gangs.

BUILDING A WEIRD WEST OUTLAW GANG

A gang's core membership probably includes about a dozen outlaws (many being former cowhands who've got no love for the law). They probably answer to a notorious gunslinger, unless the leader is someone or something weirder, as determined when you use one or more of the following tables to create additional uncanny aspects for your outlaw gang.

Many western gangs are simply named for their leader, like the Jess Daley Gang, the Dalton Gang, the William Slaughter Gang, and so on. Other times, gangs are named for some unique or uncanny aspect of the group, such as the following.

d10	Gang Name	Crimes May Include
1	Soap Gang	Victims are often hauled off and rendered into soap
2	Burrow Gang	Gang employs a couple of trained nightcrawlers
3	Drummers	Gang uses drums strung with skins of past victims to strike fear in others
4	Wolf Gang	Most of the outlaws making up the gang are werewolves
5	Cactus Gang	Gang uses bullets dipped in magical poison that transforms targets into cacti
6	Snow Guns	Members have magic guns that shoot bullets made of ice that freeze targets solid
7	Love Gang	Members gain the trust of locals before stealing all their wealth
8	The Invisibles	Not so much invisible as a gang of murdered outlaws that linger as ghosts
9	Saint Eaters	Crimes include murdering goodly people and eating their hearts for strength
10	Deadslingers	A sorcerer outlaw leader commands a crew of risen

Outlaw: *level 3, initiative and gambling as level 4; long-range gun attack deals 4 damage*

Gunslinger, page 87

Pinkerton agent: *level 3; long-range rifle attack deals 5 damage*

Gatling gun emplacement: *level 5; two long-range attacks deal 6 damage each*

Kaiju, page 338

Tomb Moon, page 178

Dawn Ranger rider: *level 3, attacks and defends as level 5 against undead*

Dawn panoply: *level 5; tasks to attack, defend against, find, and recognize undead are eased by two steps*

Other outlaw gang ideas can be found on the Who's Wanted table.

Nightcrawler, page 79

Ghost Range Marshals, page 165

Ghosts, page 331

Risen, page 92

OUTLAW HIDEOUTS

When the gang goes to ground, where is it? Options include:

d10	Gang Hideout	Weird Hideout Quirk
1	Abandoned depot	Old train car on periphery contains glowing green radioactive waste
2	Mausoleum	Good chance the outlaw leader is vampiric
3	Abandoned mine	Some tunnels are off limits because ghouls claim them
4	Ranch	Herd of zombie cattle require almost no tending
5	Old fort	Anyone who sleeps here has to do it blindfolded, or they never wake up
6	Traveling circus	Outlaws also perform as barkers, freaks, and aerialists
7	Airship	Raids preceded by outlaws gliding down on kite-like conveyances
8	Cursed mesa	As long as outlaws regularly feed captives to the quetzalsaur, all is good
9	Ghost town	Literally—outlaws know which haunted buildings not to enter
10	Lighthouse	Dry seabed stretches to horizon; can hear nonexistent waves crashing

OUTLAW LEADER NAMES

Who runs this outlaw outfit? Maybe one of these desperados:

Belinda Stiles, Leroy Bass, Mary Bell, Jack Dalton, Rufus Reynolds, Lydia Buck, Six Rivers, Evan Younger, Lisa Ketchum, Lawrence Sydney, Ameillia Newton, Ezekiel Stone, Rosalind Sage, Cole Wilson

OUTLAW LEADER QUIRKS

d10	Leader Quirk
1	Is a fallen angel
2	Is a deadshot
3	Exists only in dream
4	Plays a flute of sandstorms
5	Has two faces
6	Footprints burn with hellfire
7	Is a vampire
8	Is an alchemist
9	Hovers about a foot (30 cm) off the ground
10	Communicates telepathically

Additional outlaw hideout quirks are available in our sourcebook The Weird, *by Monte Cook Games, including the various weird locations lists.*

Radioactive waste: *level 4; deals 4 ambient damage each hour to targets in immediate range*

Ghoul, page 332
Fallen angel, page 329
Vampire, page 362

Quetzalsaur, page 79

Skinless outlaw: *level 4; regain 1 health per round even at 0 health; attacks with pistol or skinning knives*

Deadshot, page 87

Alchemist, page 78

Flute of sandstorms: *level 5; calls up sandstorm that deals 3 damage each round to exposed creatures in an adjacent very long area for one minute; depletion: 1 in 1d10*

SKINLESS SIX

Cursed by a treasure they should have left in the ground, the Skinless Six are the most awful bunch of hombres you're ever likely to meet. Not exactly alive and not completely dead, these skinless outlaws are easy to spot, owing to the fact they ain't got skin. Just raw muscle and oozing blood, though that doesn't stop them from raising hell wherever they go.

The sextet likes card games and whiskey, the same as regular folks, 'cept they don't like losing and they don't like being denied service on account of the bloodstains they leave behind. Truth be told, they're jealous of you because you probably have skin. Which is why they bet on the skins of their opponents when playing poker and roulette.

If they win a skin (or just take one), the Six may fight among themselves for who gets to wear it. But no matter what they try, freshly obtained dermises last no more than a few days before they flake to dust. Until the shrine the gang pulled out of a proscribed zone is destroyed, they're cursed to their half-life.

OUTLANDS INQUISITION

It's happened before and is fixin' to happen again: a showdown between inquisitors and lawmen.

Because here's the rub: the Outlands Inquisition don't accept that they've been branded outlaws, despite wanted posters to the contrary. They take it on faith that their divine Lord wants them to hunt down heretics, known or merely suspected. The problem is, folks hereabout don't recognize their authority, and loathe their tactics. But the Outlands Inquisition say they've got divine dispensation to act as they please. They brandish a copy of a Holy Writ as their proof—a document supposedly and perhaps actually penned by the head of their distant church. Their actions include burning down saloons and joy houses, executing "heretics" (which is anyone and everyone that won't convert to their particular faith), seizing gold and goods (for the greater good, praise the Lord), and often as not, inducting known outlaws into their ranks, so long as that outlaw "finds the Lord."

The group's main headquarters lie in a distant territory, but that foreign patronage—consisting of funding and the occasional specially trained inquisitor—allows the Outlands Inquisition to maintain its presence, despite how hated and feared they are. The Inquisition is based out of a few recently constructed monasteries. Each monastery houses about three "choirs," each choir being comprised of four to six inquisitor clerics under the command of a grand inquisitor.

Given how grandly members of the Inquisition live and dress, and how in private they are given to drinking, carousing, and even gambling like the heretics they publicly pursue, it's easy to understand why most see the inquisitors as just another variety of outlaw, the worse for it because they pretend holy piety. After all, an inquisitor can be shriven of any transgression—all they need to do is beg forgiveness from the Lord and complete an act of penance. Which is usually to go out and convert more people to the faith or, failing that, burn them as heretics and donate their wealth and belongings to the Inquisition.

NATIVE NATIONS

Your setting could include Indigenous peoples hailing from one of the many Native Nations scattered across the landscape. They have cultures, languages, and traditions unique from one another. Some exist peacefully with their neighbors. Some use a mix of both tradition and foreign innovation. Others sometimes come into conflict. But for the most part, solemn agreements hold weight when treaties are made, including those made with territories settled by people from different cultures. A spirit of cautious coexistence could well define the relationship with the non-Indigenous peoples of your setting, so long as the agreements and treaties between the peoples are upheld (as is the case for The Ghost Range setting).

Generally, Native Nations thrive in their self-governed lands. Some have embraced elements and innovations brought by newcomers, using them to their advantage. Others keep to their ancestral ways, understanding that just because something's new, it's not necessarily better. In fact, traditions passed down through the generations as a result of their relationship to the land often lead to superior results than the (sometimes disastrous) outcomes experienced by naïve settlers to prairielands and high plains. Nowhere has that wisdom been vindicated more than when it comes to steering clear of "banes" that pocket the earth—such as the proscribed zones (if they exist in your game) that Indigenous people discovered thousands of years ago and have learned through hard experience to leave undisturbed.

OTHER OPTIONS FOR INDIGENOUS INCLUSION

High Noon at Midnight approaches the topic of Indigenous peoples by acknowledging their presence, importance, and sovereignty, but focusing on alternate ahistorical regions (such as The Ghost Range). This essentially leaves it to you to decide for yourself if you want to explore Indigenous characters and regions more closely. Here are some ways to approach doing so. In a nutshell, it comes down to respect.

Center Indigenous Perspective: Make Indigenous people central to the setting. Explore their lives, struggles, resilience, and joy in the face of all the weird challenges described in this book.

Include Complex Relationships: Depict a variety of interactions between Indigenous people and newcomers in neighboring regions (like The Ghost Range). Show moments of conflict, but also instances of cooperation, trade, and friendship. Even in conflict, it is imperative that treaties be upheld.

Cultural Authenticity: If you're an Indigenous game master, you've got the bona fides. If you're not but want to include some authenticity, reach out to Indigenous people by asking around online for someone interested in helping you to more accurately portray their Indigenous culture.

Nuance and Individuality: To the extent you introduce Indigenous NPCs, treat them as complex individuals with diverse motivations and personalities. Avoid stereotypes and clichés.

Proscribed Zones, page 150

Inquisitor cleric: *level 3; Armor 1; long-range pistol (or sword) attack deals 4 damage*

Grand inquisitor: *level 5; health 22; Armor 1; long-range heavenly fire pistol attack deals 5 damage to targets in immediate range (plus other secondary potential effects)*

Heavenly fire, page 132

The Ghost Range, page 144

Understanding the history and present-day relations between Indigenous and settler people is highly encouraged. The University of Alberta's Faculty of Native Studies offers a free Massively Open Online Course (MOOC)—called Indigenous Canada—that presents the different histories and contemporary perspectives of Indigenous peoples living in Canada.

BOUNTY HUNTERS

Like outlaws, bounty hunters care less about others' welfare and more about the amount of money in their purse. Some bounty hunters are deadly professionals; others don't really know what they're doing but saw the reward offered on a wanted poster and decided to give it a go. Some bounty hunters are gunslingers with a wanted poster stuffed in their ammo belt. But typical bounty hunters have all sorts up tricks up their sleeve.

Whatever their background, bounty hunters usually only care about one thing: the reward.

Gunslinger, page 87

Bounty hunter, page 87

The Law Pursuing the Characters, page 33

Inkubus, page 86

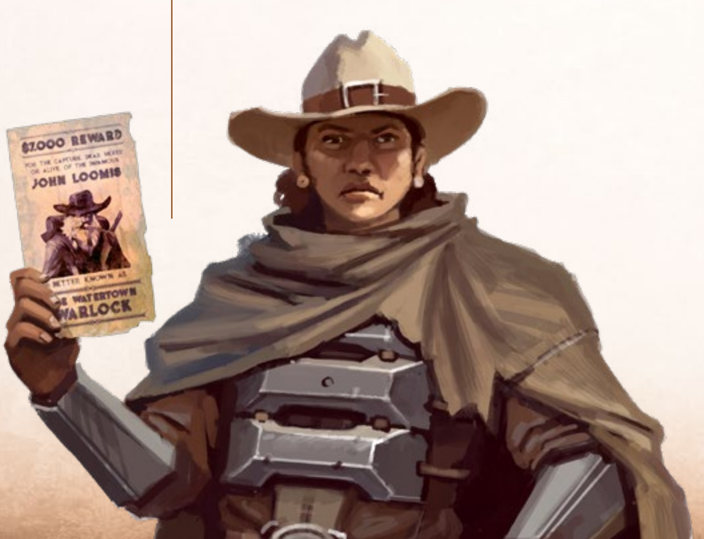
Hexed targets are those rendered magically quiescent, preventing them from endangering others or escaping. There are lots of ways to manage this feat, including using an alchemical hexing round.

Hexing round, page 133

BOUNTIES ON PCs

The law could come after PCs, but if wanted posters with the characters' likenesses pop up, bounty hunters may be the first ones to give chase. They could track and confine the PCs using similar means as the law, as well as employing the following—potentially introduced as a GM intrusion.

- Wanted poster with PC's likeness stealthily takes on substance once the PC moves past, becoming embodied as an inkubus (an "ink golem"). The inkubus secretly follows the PCs to their hideout (or wherever PCs happen to go); later, the inkubus leads the bounty hunter who seeded their creation—or paid an alchemist to do so—directly to the wanted character.
- Rather than being typical bounty hunters, those hunting the PCs are alternate timeline versions of the characters, with radically different agendas.
- The bounty hunter has obtained a possession a wanted PC once owned and, by means of sympathetic magic, uses it to make the PC sleepwalk (which the PC has no memory of), trying to get the PC to somehow compromise themself and/or the other PCs.
- The bounty hunter has made a pact with crows, which send word back to the bounty hunter if they happen to see the PCs in their territory.



HUNTER NETWORK

Organization among bounty hunters can be loose to nonexistent. However, you could include the Hunter Network (or similarly named organization) in your campaign, especially if PCs want to try their hand at bounty hunting. The Hunter Network keeps track of current bounties, informs a subset of bounty hunters about especially lucrative rewards for wanted criminals (in return for a percentage from any reward gathered), hosts a yearly bounty hunter get-together known as the Most Wanted Gala, and maintains the bounty hunter bylaws (few as they are) called the Rules of the Hunt.

Most Wanted Gala: This yearly gathering of bounty hunters, rarely held in the same town twice, is a place where those in the profession can meet, mingle, exchange gossip and tall tales, and learn the latest tricks for bringing in a bounty hexed or alive.

Rules of the Hunt: It's controversial whether there actually is a bounty hunter creed, but some bounty hunters live or die by it, despite how loose its constraints are. The following three credos (probably) constitute the Rules of the Hunt.

- Bounty hunters do not kill other hunters.
- Hunters must aid another hunter if the mutual aid "clause" is invoked, but part of that agreement means whoever offers help gets an equal share in the aided hunter's next reward.
- Hexed or alive is preferred to bringing in a bounty dead.

IMPORTANT WEIRD WEST LOCATIONS

Weird west towns, wide-open plains, mountainscapes, and other locations are rarely completely ordinary or historically accurate. Your setting might include some of the following weird options inspired by this section.

IN TOWN

Interesting communities where adventure beckons in your weird west setting are likely to be "boomtowns" (a town undergoing rapid growth due to sudden prosperity). Such communities could form and grow rapidly for several years, only to die away again when whatever first brought folks streaming in loses its shine, a crucial resource is depleted, or the town comes under some kind of curse.

A boomtown might form because gold or silver is discovered nearby, or for one of the following weirder reasons.

More established communities in your setting could easily share uncanny features leading to a boomtown's growth or weird stuff that can be found there.

d10	Reason for Surge in Town Growth
1	People think that so long as you remain in town, you won't die of sickness or of a regional curse
2	Alien invaders' defeated spaceship is brought down nearby, and diplomacy/exploration follows
3	Portals can be mined that lead into alternate, empty worlds "free" for the taking
4	Topmost edges of a colossal jade structure/statue discovered buried under nearby sands
5	Each day, one random resident who tosses a coin into the town square well has a wish granted
6	A nearby field is rich in magical stardust that sometimes falls after midnight
7	Dreamers are visited by the vision of a crow who whispers spells of strength and encouragement
8	A celebrity lives in town and people are drawn to them
9	Holy ore dubbed "angelite" is discovered, supposedly where "heaven foundered" long ago
10	Those who bury the remains of dead loved ones in the nearby desert get them back a few days later

Stardust and Dustfalls, page 147

Celebrities, page 77

TOWN SET DRESSING

When PCs first ride into town, what do they see, hear, smell, or otherwise experience? Some options from the following lists can add color each time the characters visit.

Mundane Western Set Dressing

- Gallows in town square
- Fresh pine coffins
- Cigar smoke
- Wanted signs
- Showdown in progress
- Piano music
- Blowing tumbleweed
- Hitching posts
- Stagecoach
- Horses
- Dust devil
- Railroad tracks
- Coyote
- Cemetery
- Chapel

Weird West Set Dressing

- Hovering crystal outcrop
- Glowing sigils
- Passing ghost
- Gargantuan tombstone
- Showdown with swords
- Whispering wind
- "Guts" of dead robot
- Zeppelin
- Walking cactus
- Motorcycle
- Crack between worlds
- Dinosaur tracks
- Vampire
- Alchemist's shop
- Megalithic structure

HITCHING POST
SALOON

SALOON

Typically, a saloon includes swinging doors, a bar stretching the length of the room, and a barkeep serving and mixing drinks—primarily whiskey, rum, sarsaparilla, and "coffee, clean" (coffee without any other ingredients)—from a collection of bottles behind the bar. A saloon might also have barstools, a piano in one corner, and tables and chairs scattered across the floor. Lighting is provided by oil lamps and candles. The décor includes rustic elements like faded wanted signs, a few mounted trophies of deer and buffalo, and some dusty pistols mounted above the bar.

One or more patrons may be feeling the ill effects of alcohol and be one or more steps down the intoxication track.

Patrons include several people gathered around tables playing poker and other games of chance, a few cowboys at the bar drinking in solitude, and a few parties of two to four folks discussing private matters.

Ill Effects of Drinking, page 66

Intoxication Track, page 66

Alchehemoth, page 84

GM INTRUSIONS FOR IN-TOWN ENCOUNTERS AND EVENTS

- Character is mistaken for someone else by a hex gunner and told to "Draw!"
- Character(s) see a wanted poster of themself or allies
- Sinkhole opens beneath the saloon the PCs are drinking in; creatures of some sort are below
- Gunfight breaks out between the law and outlaws and PCs are caught in the middle
- Stagecoach (or weirder vehicle) screams into town and hits the character
- Sandstorm blows into town, disrupting events and possibly threatening PC lives
- Outlaws led by a weirdly intelligent deadshot rob the bank the PCs are in or near
- Town is overrun by a stampede of giant scorpions
- An alchemist's angalith goes on a rampage, targeting the character first
- Characters discover the town is peopled entirely by ghosts

Hex gunner, page 88

Coin of tomorrow: *level 5; if flipped, always lands on whichever face owner wishes*

Deadshot, page 87

Giant scorpion: *level 3; poison stinger deals additional 3 Speed damage (ignores Armor) on failed Might defense roll*

Angalith, page 85

UNCANNY SALOONS

Your weird west saloon might have one or more of the following odder elements.

d20	Uncanny Saloons
1	Swinging doors audibly greet guests by name, or won't open for those banned
2	The mounted animal heads on the walls sometimes move and whisper among themselves
3	The bar also serves blood to appease occasional vampire visitors
4	Tree grows up through a table set for poker—one leaf falls dead per player who attempts to cheat
5	Bartender can activate a device behind bar that ejects selected patrons sitting on barstools
6	Bartender is mechanically built into the bar; they're some version of an alchehemoth
7	Bartender is a ghost, but their drinks are real enough
8	Bartender creates various beverages by alchemy—mostly for special effects
9	Bartender has no arms, but uses telekinesis to make drinks and deal with unruly patrons
10	Crows roost in the rafters; sometimes they offer advice or warnings—or go for someone's eyes
11	A gambler is playing poker with cards that electrically jolt those who fold
12	Once a night, a spectral hand rises from the table and offers a random player an extra card
13	Piano is played by what appears to be a skeleton held together by silver wire
14	A drink called Bottomless is free if a patron can drink it all; most fail or severely injure themselves
15	Patron with "coin of tomorrow" offers to pay for the drink of someone who can call his next flip
16	Photographer selling pricy daguerreotype images taken with their strange "camera" mechanism
17	Dice games of chance run at one table by shadowed figure with eight arms
18	Portrait on the wall is of a figure whose face is made of slowly turning gears and other mechanisms
19	Framed picture on the wall shows the same saloon except everyone is a shuffling corpse
20	At this table, bets are laid down on a series of upcoming tarantula fights

TOWN SQUARE (OR MAIN STREET)

Typically, a town square is whatever serves as the central point in a community, perhaps where the two largest streets cross. Or where many of the most important buildings—all wooden with wooden façades—can be reached with just a handful of strides. Those buildings probably include at least one saloon, a general store, a blacksmith, a hotel, a town hall, and the sheriff and/or mayor's office.

The dusty streets may be crowded with pedestrians, mounts, and wagons, creating a lively and chaotic atmosphere.

Your weird town square might have one or more of the following odder elements.

d20	Weird Town Square Element
1	General store has a sign in the window reading "Devil's teeth—one dozen for $1!"
2	Extensive fungal growths on the sides and roofs of most buildings; townsfolk don't care
3	Hooded figure bearing hand-lettered sign reading "Stone is Love" is rumored to be a medusa
4	Broadsheet offering a $150 bounty on grizzly bull pelts
5	Unearthly, mesmerizing singing drifts from well; residents plug their ears when they pass by
6	The square dance being held in the town hall is a magical ritual meant to ward off demons
7	Among the mounts tied to nearby hitching posts is a saddled white rhino with an iron horn
8	Gallows in the town square include the still-swaying bodies of what look like winged lizard people
9	Nearby stagecoach route includes a stop that comes up from a subterranean cave
10	Market stalls fill one part of the town square; one stall sells fresh produce called "dream corn"
11	Someone is up on the gazebo addressing passers-by, warning of impending nuclear apocalypse
12	Animated human-sized dolls in red lace and leather advertise the services of a nearby joy house
13	Someone passes out chits for a chance to win a vial of eternal optimism
14	Wagon is selling "relics" (body parts) taken from previously hanged celebrity outlaws
15	Fountain at center of town spews steaming fluid that imparts a random vision to an imbiber
16	Rune-scribed gate over entry to square is rumored to keep the place clear of vampires
17	Statues carved of light-eating mineral are scattered like frozen shadows across the square
18	At the center of the square is a floating crystal obelisk that houses an inscrutable intelligence
19	Lighthouse rises from center of town, doubling as a zeppelin mast and depot
20	Barber is a forgeborn with customized metallic cutting, combing, and related grooming equipment

Medusa: *level 5; target in short range meeting medusa's unhooded gaze turns to stone in three rounds but gains a Might defense roll each solidification round to dismiss effect*

Grizzly bull, page 79

Joy house is another name for bordello or brothel.

Forgeborn, page 84

TOWN JAIL AND SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Often, the town jail is a bit makeshift, having been hastily built and/or expanded as the town's population grows. Single-story and constructed of rough-hewn timber and stone, the jail is located near the edge of town. The jail's entrance is a heavy wooden door reinforced with iron bars over which a sign simply reads "JAIL" or maybe "SHERIFF."

Besides the main sign, wanted posters are plastered across the jail's flat façade. If the gallows aren't located near the town square, they're outside the jail.

Inside, a couple of high, small, barred windows allow outside light to shine in. The main room is sparsely furnished with a few wooden benches and a desk where the sheriff (perhaps just an ordinary sheriff, or maybe a true lawman) keeps their files, fills out paperwork, and so on. A deputy may also be in attendance, assuming normal operations. More wanted posters are displayed on the walls (though many are the same as those outside).

The main room opens onto at least two cells with barred doors, each containing only a basic cot and chamber pot.

Quetzalsaur, page 79

Jail entrance (and barred windows): *level 5*

Ghost, page 331

Ghost, Cypher System Bestiary, page 44

Sheriff: *level 3; health 12; long-range pistol attack deals 4 damage*

Lawman, page 87

Deputy: *level 2; health 9; long-range pistol attack deals 4 damage*

Hex gunner, page 88

Locomotem, page 84

Shade of the tomb, page 94

SADE KARONHES

UNCANNY JAILS

Your weird jail might have one or more of the following odder elements.

d20	Unusual Jail Trait
1	Instead of prisoners, the cell is stacked with quetzalsaur eggs
2	Each turn of the key in the lock surfaces a new cell and hides the previous one below
3	Graffiti carved into jail wall by previous occupant accuses the sheriff of unholy deeds
4	Icy imprint resembling a sleeping figure remains cold to the touch years after their incarceration
5	Lever on side of cell can prevent sound from traveling into and out of cell
6	Ghost of an outlaw sometimes appears in the night, giving advice on how to escape
7	Floor is made of glass, allowing view into subterranean scorpion den
8	Weird contraption on the ceiling of each cell rumbles and smokes to no obvious end
9	Gamblers from nearby casino routinely offer bail money to a prisoner who can win at poker
10	Word puzzle (difficulty 5 Intellect task to solve) scrawled on wall reveals a cursed artifact's location
11	Upsetting shadows of objects and figures not actually in the jail make any stay even more tense
12	If a jailbreak is detected, sluice in ceiling floods cells with transparent, living digestive gel
13	A prisoner is already behind bars—a hex gunner whose pistols are locked in sheriff's desk
14	Guts of a cuckoo clock laid out on sheriff's desk, a long-term repair project they struggle with
15	A pentagram is burned into the floor of each cell, but sheriff says it's nothing to worry about
16	Jailbreak event incited when a locomotem smashes into the side of the jail
17	Newspaper writer wants to interview PCs thrown in jail about their exploits, offering bail in exchange
18	Every so often, a prisoner just disappears from the cell without a trace
19	Current prisoners promised freedom so long as they join a posse chasing a tomb shade
20	Town preacher is locked up for a series of violent assaults; are they possessed by an evil spirit?

OTHER LOCATIONS IN TOWN

Lots of other places in town offer opportunities for encounters in your weird west games, including the following. A few ideas for related uncanny options are provided for each.

The Bank

Townsfolk and prospectors alike store their wealth in what might be one of the few buildings built completely of stone and/or brick in town. The word "BANK" may be helpfully inscribed in the structure's façade.

Inside, one or two teller stations stand along the back wall, enshrouded in iron cages should a customer get uppity or bank robbers appear. A locked vault door controls access into the interior vault whose walls are covered in smaller locked safe deposit boxes in which valuables, cash, scrip, and similar items are stored.

Unusual options for a weird west bank include:

- The vault door can only be (easily) unlocked by a teller with a matching mechanical arm.
- The bank is protected by a forgeborn golem to keep its deposits safe.
- The vault interior exists in another dimension/location, and only safe deposit box owners (or key holders) are transported there—everyone else enters an empty chamber behind the tellers.
- The animated mannequin dressed as a bank teller is possessed by a wraith lord that emerges in the event of trouble.

The Chapel

Some towns have one or more chapels (also called churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples). Sometimes set inside town limits, other times situated within an easy walk of the town's outskirts, the chapel—featuring at least one high steeple with a holy symbol on top—is a whitewashed structure large enough for some percentage of townsfolk to fit inside in the main area (the nave), with room outside for overflow crowds. It's where people gather for worship, weddings, funerals, and other important ceremonies.

Chapels have high ceilings, possibly a stained glass window or two, and a pulpit up front where a preacher of the faith speaks to those gathered during religious services. The specific religion practiced in a chapel is whatever suits your game. Regardless of the trappings, it's probably something that attempts to offer guidance, a sense of community, and/or solace to those who attend.

Unusual options for a weird west chapel include:

- Funeral rites at the chapel end with the body being fed to "the holy one" in the basement.
- After each sermon, churchgoers are treated to coffee and candied fairy wings.
- The whole thing is cover for a secretive cult worshipping a ghastly undead god.
- The preacher is also the fastest draw in town, as he has demonstrated from the pulpit.

The General Store

This wooden structure is a one- or two-story structure with an awning that shades the porch displaying "GENERAL STORE" and maybe the proprietor's name. As with most buildings in town, hitching posts out front allow visitors and suppliers a place to tie their mounts.

Inside, floor-to-ceiling shelves are crammed with merchandise, vying for space with barrels and crates full of bulk goods like flour, salt, and sugar.

Generally speaking, most of the basic goods noted in Chapter 9: Currency and Equipment of the Weird West can be purchased in a general store.

The checkout counter might have a glass display case containing a few valuable items like tools and jewelry, a large set of scales for weighing loose goods like beans or nails, and a mechanical register. A metal safe is located somewhere nearby.

Unusual options for a weird west general store include:

- On sale: glass jar filled with glimmering fireflies gathered last night, guaranteed.
- Itinerant tattoo artist set up in the corner whose tattoos move about once inked.
- On sale: dreamcatchers that actually work, but caught nightmares are later released.
- Store proprietor and four staff are all the same person. Quintuplets? Clones? Time-dupes?

Preacher, quick-draw: *level 4, initiative as level 8; long-range pistol attack deals 6 damage*

Locked vault door: *level 6*

Locked safe deposit box: *level 5*

Golem, page 336

Golem, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 184*

Chapter 9: Currency and Equipment of the Weird West, page 118

Wraith lord, page 89

Metal safe: *level 5*

Nightmare, personal: *level 1, level 5 against person who dreamed it up*

The Alchemist Shop

Chapter 10: Cyphers and Artifacts of the Weird West, page 123

Alchemist, page 78

In a weird west setting where magic is real, alchemists might be as legendary as outlaws, depending on their behavior. But those guided by a stronger sense of ethics who wish to make a living by selling their wares may set up a shop in a community small enough that they can corner the market, but not so large that they face competition from similarly minded alchemists.

From the outside, an alchemist's shop looks a lot like a general store, the difference being the sign reads something like "ALCHEMY," "Alchemical Rounds, Tinctures, and Forgecraft," or similar.

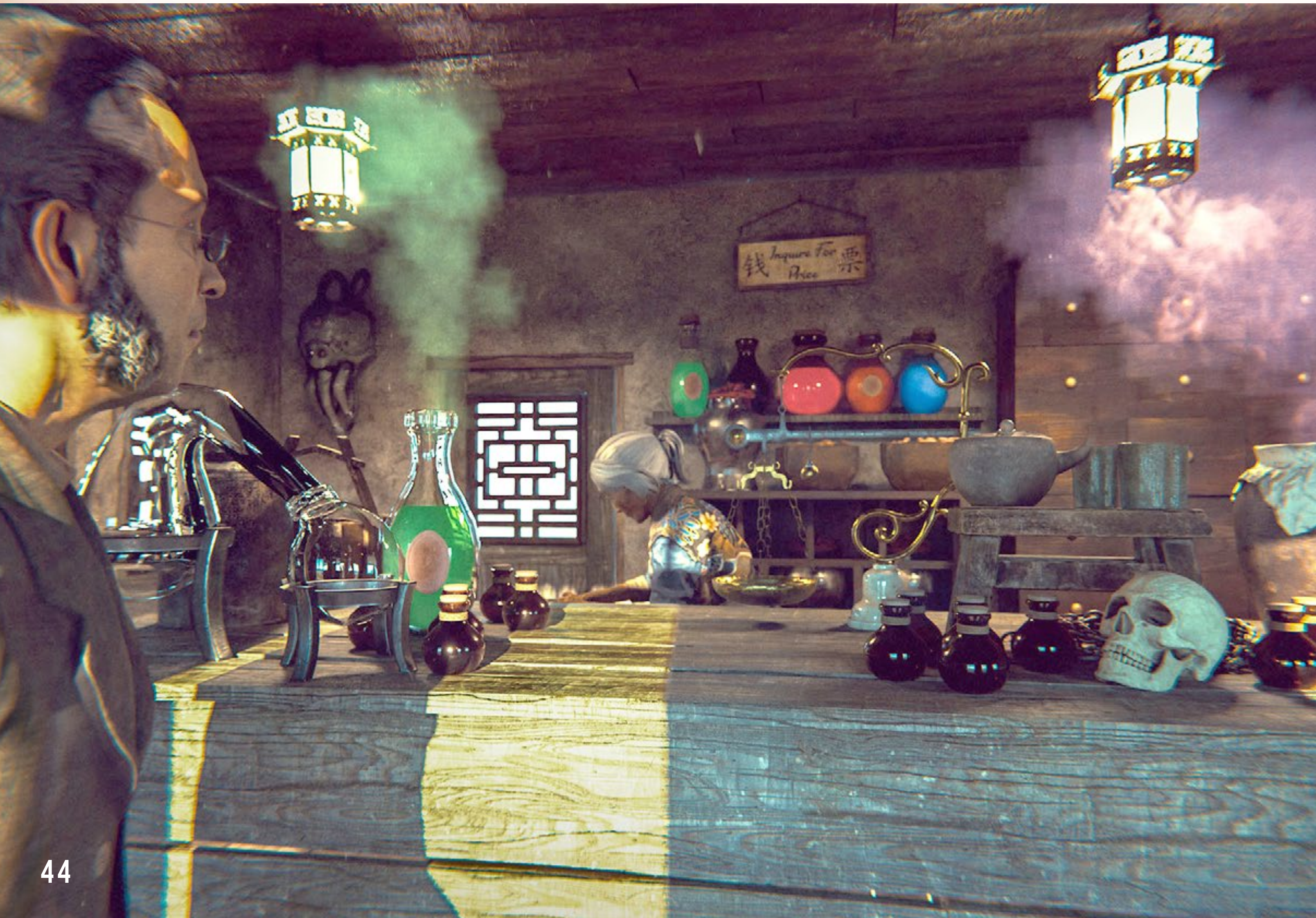
Inside, most everything of real value is behind the counter where the alchemist or their apprentice (or forgeborn assistant customized for handling sales) stands. There, shelves hold metal mechanisms, liquid in glass vials (tinctures), and all manner of other items, plus a door into a back storeroom where larger items can be obtained.

Forgeborn assistant: *level 3; health 15; Armor 1*

A subsection of the items described in Chapter 10: Cyphers and Artifacts of the Weird West can be purchased in an alchemist shop, with rotating availability—only a handful of items are available at any one time, and each one is at least an expensive cost, or very expensive if higher than level 5.

An alchemist shop selling items that are legitimately magical is uncanny on its face. However, a few additional options to consider include:

- On sale: Fairy lures made of bone and string for just a few cents each. Not magical.
- On sale: Fireworks! No practical effect other than flashes and bangs. Not magical.
- On sale: Cotton beef. Like cotton candy, but savory. Not magical, or to everyone's taste.
- Doubles as the town blacksmith shop, which is attached.



The Hotel or Boarding House

A hotel with aspirations of class features a wooden boardwalk siding the street to protect guests from mud, dust, and manure. Many also include a wrap-around veranda to provide shade and rocking chairs and benches for guests to lounge. The wooden sign above the porch reads "HOTEL" or even "GRAND HOTEL" if the structure is three stories tall.

Inside, the lobby's wooden floor may enjoy a strip of carpet, some overstuffed chairs near a fireplace, and a reception desk where one or two hotel employees are ready to book customers—or, failing that, a bell that can be pressed to call for service.

Rooms are generally small and cramped with a single window, though at least one suite is available, promising multiple rooms, a comfortable bed, and linens mostly free of bedbugs.

Boarding houses have a parlor instead of a lobby, and finding the proprietor might require leaving a message or returning at a specified time.

Unusual options for weird west hotels include:

- Magical portrait of a person serves as the hotel clerk.
- Has an elevator-like mechanism that connects to seventeen subterranean levels.
- Boasts that every single room is haunted by somebody; which ghost is right for your stay?
- Simply doesn't exist on certain days; for guests, no time seems to pass during the "lapse."

Doctor's Office

This wooden structure's signage proclaims "DOCTOR" and incudes the image of a caduceus (medical symbol of a staff with two snakes coiled around it).

If space is at a premium, signage on the front of the doctor's office reveals the building also houses a surveying firm, a law firm, and/or a prospecting claims reseller.

Inside is a small waiting area with a couple of benches as well as a desk for the doctor (or perhaps an aide, if the doctor sees a lot of patients) to handle administrative tasks. The walls have a few medical certificates, proclaiming the doctor in residence has completed their studies. The air smells of a mix of antiseptic and cigar smoke.

The main examination room is the adjoining chamber, featuring a sturdy table for patients to recline on and a bureau containing scalpels, forceps, a stethoscope, and other medical instruments. Shelves in easy reach hold jars of medicines (many of them with a homemade look to them), bandages, and similar supplies. Another shelf probably contains medical journals and reference books.

Unusual options for a weird west doctor's office include:

- The current half-conscious patient nearly spilling out of the adjoining examination chamber is a 10-foot (3 m) tall humanoid covered in hair as thick as fur; could it be a "wild one?"
- The doctor is concerned because while they were examining the corpse of a stranger to determine cause of death, it suddenly spasmed and got "bitey."
- One of the certificates of medical prowess on the wall indicates the doctor also won a high-stakes poker tournament held in town the last three years running.
- More and more cats are revealed to be living in the office the longer a patient stays; if a patient tries to leave without paying, a tide of cats swarms and tries to eat the cheapskate.
- Smaller towns might only have a dentist, who combines the abilities of a barber, dentist, and surgeon, but with less skill and more possibilities for less-than-ideal outcomes.

Wild one: *level 5, wilderness and magical lore as level 7; health 24; Armor 1; batters foes twice as their action*

WILDERNESS

A big portion of wild west stories, shows, and movies take place in the wilderness, far from town. That's just as likely to be true for a weird west story, show, or in this case, game setting. The towns PCs make for are probably few and far between if they find themselves traveling by horse, coach, train, zeppelin, magic, or something else uncanny.

The reason a standard western features so much "wild" land is because it hasn't yet been overrun with newcomers. Historically, a western is a snapshot in time, and like tears in rain, will be gone soon enough. Given that weird west games are ahistorical at their core, other reasons—or at least, additional reasons—for the pervasive expanse of wilderness likely exist.

d10	Weird Reason Wilderness Is So Pervasive
1	Kaiju eventually emerge and destroy settlements too close together and too large
2	Vampire overlords cull the population by 50% every thirty-three years
3	Residue from the nuclear apocalypse means most places are unsafe to linger
4	Because space travel is fast and cheap, people are always pushing into new worlds
5	Magic warding spells prevent overdevelopment by usually subtle but sometimes drastic means
6	That's the way the parameters of the computer simulation were set
7	Industrial innovation was mostly stymied when waves of magic began crashing into the world
8	Ancient vengeful deities claim wilderness areas and punish those who push wild borders back
9	Pockets of extraordinarily unsafe territory (proscribed zones) keep development to a minimum
10	The treaties and promises made to Native Nations were expansive, wide-ranging, and kept

Proscribed zones, page 150

GM Note: A little weird goes a long way, page 26

Kaiju, page 338

Cactus, animate: *level 5; batters twice each round*

Tornado, fire: *level 5; attacks all creatures in short range each round*

Wasp swarm: *level 3; attacks all creatures in immediate area each round*

Gunslinger, page 87

Cholera: *level 4 disease; character is hindered by three steps until they succeed on three Might defense rolls (one made each 12 hours)*

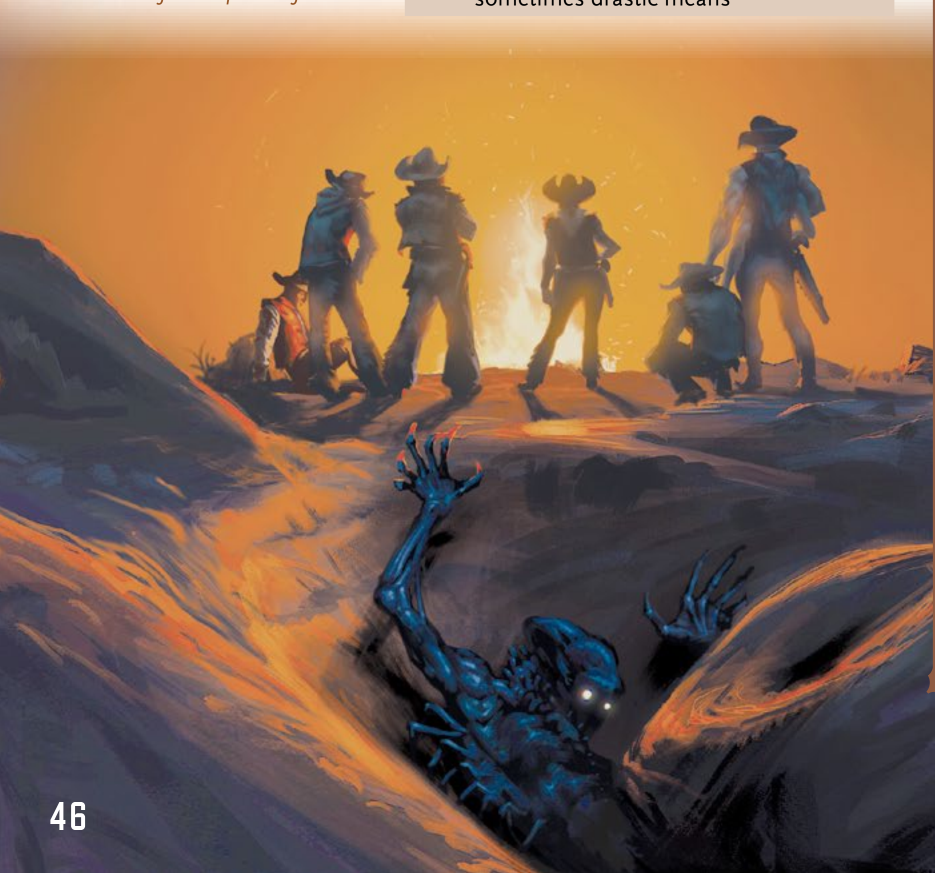
Mist, acidic: *level 3; deals 3 damage each round on failed Speed defense roll*

Whatever the reason the wilderness exists in your game, the following specific weird wilderness ideas can help flesh out your game with curious and unsettling aspects.

And as was noted previously, a little weird goes a long way. Don't let the sheer number of weird options make you feel as if you need to include all or even most of them in your setting.

GM INTRUSIONS FOR WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS AND EVENTS

- A boulder balanced on a spire topples, threatening to smash/trap character
- A 30-foot (9 m) tall cactus animates itself and does its best to smash the character
- A storm of green fire rips through the area, the vanguard of a tornado of emerald flame
- The map of the route through the badlands was inaccurate; the PCs are lost
- Enraged wasps swarm from beneath the butte
- PCs stumble into a group of desperate outlaws led by a hungry gunslinger
- The yellowish desert flowers have a soporific effect (level 5) on those who pass by
- Something the character ate or drank infected them with cholera
- The bank of orangish mist pushing along the gullies is acidic



BADLANDS

Badlands resist visitors because they're hard to survive in. Serrated, spine-like terrain forms an eroded, barren landscape that stretches as far as the eye can see, sometimes overlapping (or indistinguishable from) deserts. Pathways between the rugged landforms are a maze of gullies, ravines, and canyons carved by erosion. There is little if any vegetation, though cacti and scrub brush might exist.

Specific landforms common in badlands include the following.

Deserts, page 49

Hoodoo: Irregular spires of rock, formed by erosion, which create unlikely shapes characterized by boulder-like formations balanced on thinner spires.

Arch: Almost resembling remnants of intentional architecture, these (usually) natural rock arches formed by erosion can stretch 100 feet (30 m) wide and high, or higher.

Mesa: These wide, flat-topped elevated landforms are like great, steep-sided ships grounded in the "sea" of a wider, often desert-like region.

Butte: Significantly smaller than mesas, buttes are flat-topped hills or small mountains that usually stand alone. If given enough time and weather, a butte could erode into a hoodoo.

WEIRD BADLANDS FEATURES

Unusual options for a weird badlands region include:

d20	Weird Badlands Feature
1	Cephalopod fossils: gargantuan, many-armed octopus-like creatures with dozens of eyes
2	The spheroid tops of some hoodoos are actually eggs of long-extinct super predator
3	Arches are portals that transport travelers to connecting arches elsewhere, such as on the moon
4	Echoes of speech chase down the gullies between badland spires, suggesting mineral intelligence
5	Cavemouth in side of mesa leads into caverns filled with dangerous fungus
6	Ring of stones set by ancient beings is a ward keeping something dangerous holed up
7	Miles-wide crater filled with metal debris; something at the bottom draws iron and steel to itself
8	Permanent cloudbank churns with purple and red streamers when magic levels rise
9	Walk one way through the badlands maze into the future, and the other into the past
10	Strange "graffiti" covers badlands formations—geometric, artful designs in red and yellow chalk
11	Dust storms with a pearlescent shimmer petrify living and undead things alike
12	Crystal lizards called quartzscales scamper across the formations, harmless unless disturbed
13	Twin hoodoos astride a gully magically charge anything that passes between them
14	Amidst the arid dryness, an oasis of green fed by a spring that only appears at certain times
15	Some hoodoos and buttes are hives of termite-like insects that dislike company
16	Humanoid giants roam the badlands, their heads sometimes visible behind the mesas
17	Inky squid-like creatures live in tar pits that dot the region and may pull in unsuspecting prey
18	A hard-to-find canyon between plateaus is filled with human skeletons stacked like cordwood
19	If a traveler finds the Blue Cave and sleeps within, they meet otherworldly deities in their dreams
20	Roach fossils: dinosaur-sized cockroaches, some with disturbingly human features

Quartzscale: *level 3; Armor 3; rasping tongue deals 5 damage*

Giant, page 333

For additional information on giants, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 38*

STRANGE FOLK IN THE WILDERNESS

Downright strange folk sprout up out of nowhere like tumbleweeds in a dust storm. There's no telling how they'll react when encountered for the first time. The one thing uniting the various kinds of strange folk wandering the unmapped territories is that they're as smart as people (or maybe smarter?), except they're not normal. That said, they ain't spirits, nor animals; they're living beings, mysterious and sometimes dangerous to explorers, prospectors, others traveling their lands, and at times even each other.

Strange folk have their own languages, and maybe their own kinds of writing. Few seem interested in learning how humans talk.

Strange folk include wild ones and many others.

Wild one, page 45

PRAIRIELANDS

Vast prairies stretch across wide territories. Predominantly grassland, scattered trees and shrubs may break up the otherwise wide-open skies and smooth horizons around creeks, rivers, and lakes. Hot in the summer and snow-covered in the winter, prairielands can be challenging for settlers. Native Nations in the area regard the regions as vast hunting grounds, particularly for bison herds, but also for any number of cursed beasts that lair among the grasses.

***Razorgrass:** level 3; each immediate distance traveled inflicts damage on a failed Speed defense roll*

Cursed beasts, page 79

Massive storms—tornadoes in the summer and blizzards in the winter—should be expected and prepared for. Those that do not take heed—usually settlers and ranchers—are never seen again.

Specific landforms common on prairielands include the following.

Vampire, page 362

For additional information on Vampires, Cypher System Bestiary, page 62

High Plains vs. Great Plains: Higher and drier, high plains are usually separated from lower, wetter great plains by escarpments—a series of steep slopes or cliffs leading down to lower-lying areas.

Grasslands: Drought-resistant grasses spread as far as the eye can see on the high plains. In wetter great plains areas, grasses can grow to 6 feet (2 m) or taller. In drier high-plains regions, grasses grow to about a foot (30 cm).

Creeks: Flowing in the spring, creeks can dwindle or even dry up in the summer. Sandy, rocky beds and shallow depths mean that even flowing creeks can be crossed on horseback or wagon, or by leaping from boulder to boulder. Later in the season, the creek might become a dusty, winding lane sunk below the grass line.

Risen, page 92

Lakes: Many lakes on the high plains are smaller and shallower than lakes of the wetter great plains, and are often saltier and/or more alkaline than other lakes due to frequent evaporation. Great plains lakes are full of fish and the occasional lake monster.

***Lake monster:** level 5; swims (and moves on land) a short distance each round*

Rolling Hills: Gentle swells create hills and broad valleys here and there across the otherwise flat plains, remnants of ancient geologic events.

WEIRD PRAIRIELANDS FEATURES

Unusual options for weird prairielands include:

d20	Weird Prairielands Feature
1	Grove of trees in the middle of nowhere haunted by a flock of ghost crows
2	Region of razorgrass makes passage difficult if not downright deadly
3	Valley slopes down to a lake of glowing pink waters surrounded by dead white trees
4	A herd of "plains turtles" each the size of a wagon slowly creeps across the prairie
5	Every thirteen hours, a geyser sprays boiling blood high into the sky
6	The rolling hills in the area "roll," slowly changing height and elevation like sea swells
7	When it rains, the muddy soil disgorges hungry undead things (with vampire stats)
8	Some nights, the stars directly come down and dance with fiery forms on the plains
9	Region of weirdly swaying grass is actually stand of thin, green worms
10	Abandoned ranch where ghost cattle still graze
11	The reflection of an extra moon is visible in the lake
12	An oxbow in the river where leeches grow as large as people
13	Area of the plains where strange geometric designs appear under the cover of darkness
14	Every spring the grass pollen blowing in from that hill causes anaphylaxis in every human
15	Henge-style monument in the middle of the plains sometimes changes configuration
16	Huge tree standing alone flowers year round, but blooms constantly change
17	A community of risen—folks that are dead but still move and think—live along the dry river
18	Here, electricity won't work, guns fail to fire, and magical effects are magnified threefold
19	Thousands of human skulls form a spire reaching for the sky
20	The lake is always frozen even in high summer

DESERTS

Unforgiving deserts are common in the wilderness, usually blending seamlessly with badlands. Their harsh conditions test anyone trying to traverse their arid reach. Sun-baked earth featuring parched, cracked ground is sometimes interrupted by mountain ranges, salt lakes, dry riverbeds, and mesas. Vegetation is either absent or limited to scrub grass, cacti, and tumbleweeds.

The bleached bones of animals that have succumbed to the heat are a common sight—most iconically, the bleached skull of a horned steer.

In the desert, both heat and dehydration can kill (as can rattlesnakes).

Too Hot (level 4): Sometimes it gets too hot for human survival. A PC could die of heat exhaustion within just a few hours. When these conditions apply (when a PC can't find someplace to cool off and/or get out of the sun), the character takes 1 point of ambient damage every ten minutes. In addition, a character exposed to extreme heat must make a level 4 Might defense roll (hindered if the character is also dehydrated) every ten minutes. On a failed roll, the character descends one step on the damage track.

Dehydration (level 5): A dry mouth and skin, fatigue, and confusion could mean a character is becoming dehydrated. Dehydration can set in after just a few hours without water, and the effects can quickly escalate. PCs who go without water take 3 points of ambient damage every twelve hours. On any day a PC has taken dehydration damage, their tasks are hindered (even if the character makes a recovery roll to regain lost Pool points). In addition, after one day without water, a dehydrated character must succeed on a level 5 Might defense roll each day. On a failed roll, the character descends one step on the damage track.

UNCANNY DESERT FEATURES

Unusual options for uncanny deserts include:

d20	Uncanny Desert Feature
1	City-like formation of rocky pyramids and obelisks surrounding a sealed crypt
2	Animate sand dunes, seeded by a corpse—a tombdrift—follow whoever moves in the area
3	Lone cactus, needles oozing a poison rumored to unlock prophetic visions as imbiber dies
4	Tumbleweed herd shepherded by a withered cowboy riding a stone horse—a deathbinder?
5	Caravan of scorpions carries stone slates carved with ancient glyphs across the sands
6	Series of buttes or one large mesa is made of eroded, translucent glass
7	After a windstorm, the "sand" is revealed as millions of tiny scorpion eggs that begin hatching
8	At night, as if summoned by the temperature drop, ice elementals roam
9	Sunken area filled with debris from lost trains that disappeared from distant locations
10	Oasis inhabited by swan people (a variety of strange folk) who are suspicious of newcomers
11	Dimensional tunnel leading to land of dreams lies between two glyph-scribed petrified cacti
12	Playa (level flat region) hosts nightly gathering of forlorn and dead spirits under ghost lanterns
13	Caves honeycomb the canyon, each one resembling the bony socket of a spectral eye
14	Due to odd magical weather, mirage of a distant town seems real out in the sands
15	Ancient pavements from long-vanished civilization miles wide, partly covered by dunes
16	Salt dragon a mile (1.6 km) in length sleeps in the desert for years, usually mistaken for landform
17	Echoes spread from even moderately loud speech, swiftly becoming crashing thunder before dying
18	Magic doesn't work in the area until the rains come
19	Pagoda made of sandstone stands empty but for shadows cast somewhere else
20	Human hundreds of feet long lies half-buried in the sands—rumor suggests a dead god

Badlands, page 47

Tombdrift, page 93

Deathbinder, page 90

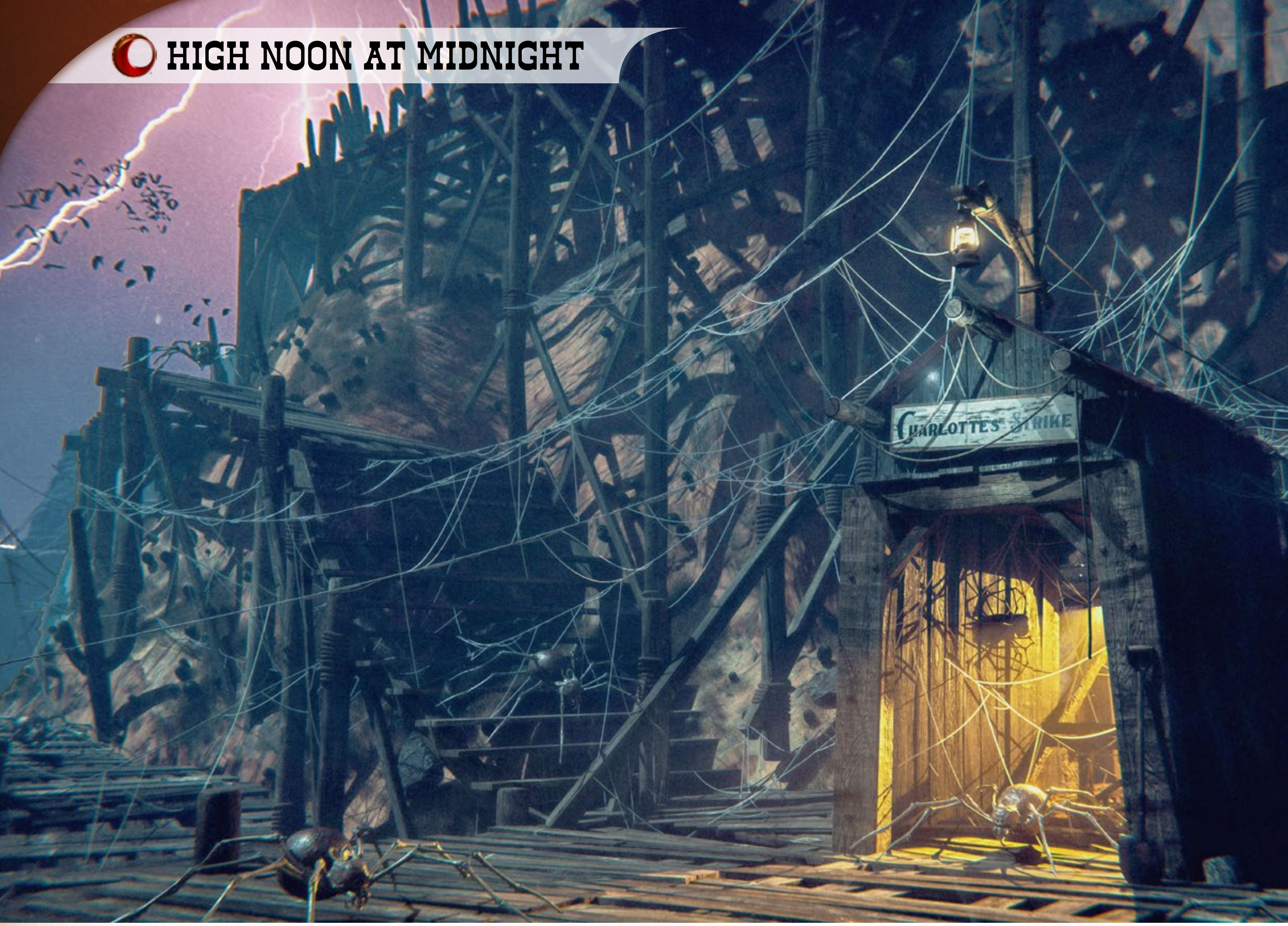
Rattlesnake: *level 2; venomous bite attack eased, deals 3 Speed damage (ignores armor) for three rounds*

Ice elemental: *level 4; health 18; Armor 2; touch deals 4 Speed damage (ignores Armor) from cold*

Strange Folk in the Wilderness, page 47

Ambient Damage, page 217

Salt dragon, mile-long: *level 10*



MINES

Stardust and Dustfalls, page 147

The discovery of valuable ores and minerals draws newcomers into the wilderness and is why many boomtowns spring up. Gold, silver, iron, and maybe even sedimentary layers of stardust falls from ancient eras are extracted in weird west mines, among other things.

Most mines are located in the side of a hill or mountain. The entrance is reinforced with timber and rock supports to add stability and prevent collapse. Other mines include a tall external structure (a "hoist house") containing a pulley system that can raise and lower miners and their equipment down a vertical shaft to the first horizontal tunnel. Piles of waste rock ("tailings") lie near the entrance; miners previously brought the material up from the mine and discarded what wasn't wanted.

Horizontal tunnels are reinforced with regular sets of timber frames to guard against collapse. These tunnels are relatively spacious near the entrance, but gradually narrow the farther and deeper one travels into the mine. Some mines have narrow-gauge railway tracks laid on the floor for ore carts, which can be pushed or pulled by miners.

The main tunnel branches off into various "workings" where active mining once happened (or is still happening) or to provide ventilation. Branches might be horizontal ("adits") or vertical ("raises").

In an active mine, light is provided by candles and oil lamps, and/or various magically prepared common objects (stones, spikes, shovels and pickaxes, etc.) that produce bright light in immediate range.

Various hazards threaten those who delve into mines, such as the following.

Collapse (level 4): The walls shake and portions of the ceiling fall in an immediate area within a tunnel. Creatures in the area take 4 points of damage from the fall on a failed Speed defense roll and are buried under the rock. Those who succeed take only 1 point of damage and are not buried. Buried creatures take 1 point of ambient damage each minute from the crush until they can escape.

A collapse means a tunnel is no longer passable; creatures who initially made a successful Speed defense roll have a 50% chance of being on the side of the tunnel that leads back to the surface. Clearing the collapse takes a couple of hours and requires a successful Might-based roll (eased by any mining-related knowledge) to open a passage wide enough for a human to pass. A failed roll means another collapse could happen.

Toxic Gas (level 4): A pocket of toxic gas—usually invisible—has collected in the area. It has one of the two possible effects, depending on the kind of gas.

- *Explosion:* Open flames cause an explosion filling an immediate area, dealing 4 points of damage to those who fail a Speed defense roll and 1 point to those who succeed. It's possible an explosion could trigger a collapse.
- *Asphyxiation:* An invisible gas that asphyxiates (carbon monoxide is a good candidate) fills a short area. After spending three rounds in the area (and for every successive three rounds thereafter), a character moves one step down the damage track on a failed Might defense roll.

Cursed Vein (level 5): A layer of burned material laid down during a cursed epoch manifests as a glowing red sedimentary line diagonally bisecting the tunnel. Those who pass it are afflicted with maddening visions of horror on a failed Intellect defense roll. Maddened targets can only scream and stare at their "recollections" of the cursed epoch, taking 2 points of Intellect damage each round until they succeed on an Intellect defense roll on a subsequent turn. Afterward, details of the vision fade, and the vein shifts to some other location.

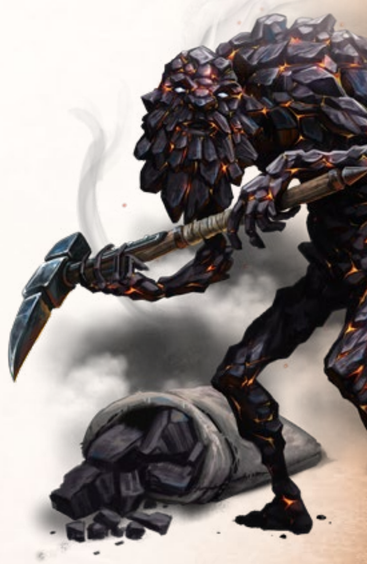
UNCANNY MINE FEATURES

Unusual options for uncanny mines include:

d20	Uncanny Mine Feature
1	Cursed vein of red glowing material laid down during a primeval, horrific epoch (see above)
2	Section of tunnels where weird petroglyphs on wall cause viewers to fall into enchanted sleep (level 5)
3	Dark crevice that seems to go down forever, up from which alluring whispers echo
4	Colony of mine roaches (level 5) that seem to have acquired a taste for miners' flesh
5	Mine shudders every so often in a manner somehow reminiscent of a creature's disturbed sleep
6	Tunnels pass through vast region of translucent crystal through which a huge eye is just visible
7	Flood of glowing yellow water washes up the tunnel, possibly expelling intruders back outside
8	Gravity in the area is normal to every surface, which means creatures can walk on walls and ceiling
9	Tunnel breaks into natural underground cavern where nightcrawlers lair in huge numbers
10	Mine claimed by 3-foot (1 m) tall spindly humanoids made of coal—coal nixies
11	Crystal outcrop in the cavern suppresses all magic and other "weird" effects in chamber
12	Cavern filled with fresh, clean water inhabited by freshwater octopi
13	Outlaws that worship a glowing ultra-black hovering obelisk have claimed the mine
14	Voices and entire conversations that happened in the past (and future) replay in the mine
15	Glowing filigree hanging in area can create short-lived telepathic bridges between people
16	Some missing miners are finally found, only half absorbed into the mine's walls
17	Mine was used as storage space for variety of toxic alchemical byproducts, but they're leaching out
18	Forgeborn minecart, created to aid the miners, threw off its bindings and killed everyone
19	Minds of long-dead beings attempt to take over bodies of those who spend time in the mine
20	Mine shaft begins to contract and close, revealing itself as the throat of massive creature

Nightcrawler, page 79

Coal nix: *level 3, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; health 12; pickaxe deals 4 damage; aura of coal dust causes creatures in immediate range to violently choke until they succeed on a Might task to recover.*



Forgeborn minecart: *level 5; Armor 2; can't leave rails; ramming attack deals 6 damage*

MOUNTAINS

Mountains feature jagged, snow-capped peaks, often partially swaddled in towering cloudbanks. Lower slopes are dark with pine, fir, and spruce forests, except where slabs of ancient granite create flatiron-like regions. Rivers sometimes dramatically empty from mountainsides as lacy waterfalls.

Frostwalker, page 81

Threats of extreme cold and avalanche are common in the mountains, plus dangers posed by bears and, usually, more uncanny and horrific threats, as described hereafter.

Bear, black: *level 3, attacks as level 4*

Bear, grizzly: *level 5; health 20; Armor 1*

Too Cold (level 4): Up in the mountains, it can become too cold for survival. Generally, a PC can survive extreme cold for about twenty minutes to about two hours. In game terms, unprotected characters, or even characters who have less than adequate protection, suffer 1 point of ambient damage per hour in temperatures near or below 32° F (0° C), or 1 point of ambient damage per round in subzero (–18° C) conditions. In addition, PCs in subzero temperatures with inadequate protection must succeed on a difficulty 4 Might defense roll each hour or descend one step on the damage track.

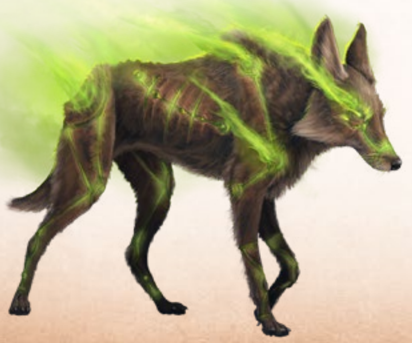
Grizzly bull, page 79

Avalanche (level 5): A rumble precedes the falling snow and ice across a very long area; characters who succeed on a Speed defense roll make it to safety. Those who fail suffer 5 points of damage as they're buried beneath the avalanche. Escape attempts by the covered target are hindered by two steps because they are essentially locked in place by the enveloping snow. A character descends one step on the damage track each ten minutes they remain covered from a combination of cold and suffocation. Perception tasks to find and dig up the trapped target are eased if the searching character witnessed the victim being covered by the avalanche.

Damned, page 99

Wild one: *level 5, wilderness and magical lore as level 7; health 24; Armor 1; batters foes twice as their action*

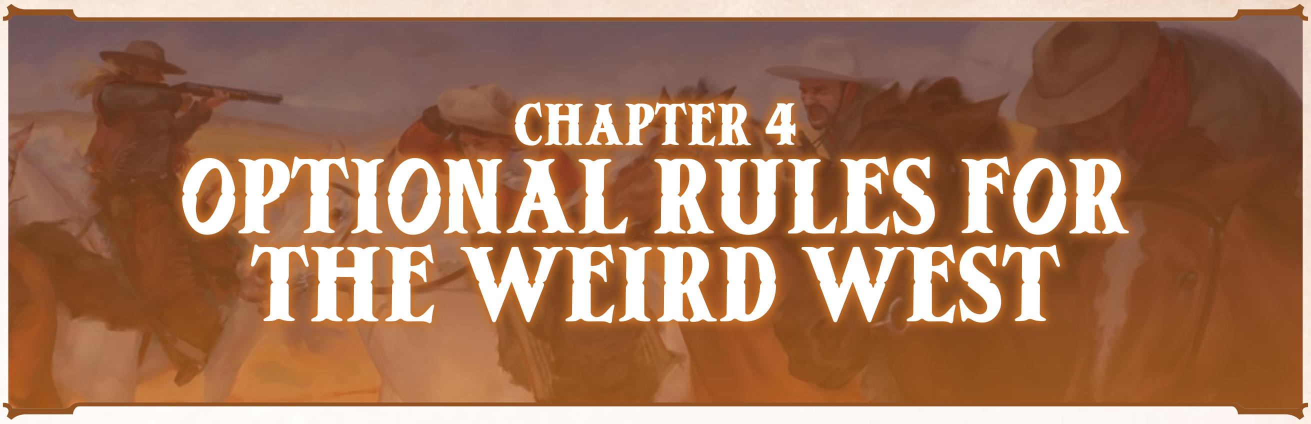
Dire coyote, page 80



UNCANNY MOUNTAIN FEATURES

Unusual options for uncanny mountains include:

d20	Uncanny Mountain Feature
1	Creatures covered by avalanches in the area are soon "rescued" by a frostwalker
2	Mining town where all the prospectors and miners stand silent, transformed to salt
3	The mountain's rugged profile is subtly different every time the sun comes up
4	Massive visages carved into the side of the mountain are tentacled and sigil-scribed
5	Scree slope of rubble is actually a tremendous spill of eggs of an arachnid-adjacent kaiju
6	Acidic fog that descends the mountain smells of rotting sea creatures
7	Anyone taking damage from extreme cold has a vision of ice titans destroying the world
8	Mountaineer's cabin offers shelter to travelers, but the mountaineer turns out to be a ghost
9	A hermit trapper-hunter with a grizzly bull pet/companion claims the mountain as their own
10	Patch of forest looks discolored from afar; close up, it's revealed that the trees are perfectly petrified
11	Massive outcrop resembling a needle's eye de-ages those who pass through it
12	Sometimes the rocks get up and dance about at night, but settle again like boulders before dawn
13	The bridge across the chasm is made of human corpses; necromancy is the mortar
14	Trade fort is found empty, gates standing open, as if everyone just walked out all at once
15	Remote mountain town filled with quiet people that initially hide their Damned status
16	Gargantuan boulder made of translucent pink granite is perfectly spherical, but partly buried
17	Region is claimed by hairy 10 foot (3 m) tall humanoids (wild ones) that dislike strangers finding them
18	Peak is guarded by pack of dire coyotes
19	The weirdly strange "flatirons" (mountain foothills with steep, flat, rocky sides) are actually part of an ancient city (or spacecraft)
20	Beyond the mountains lies an endless void filled with distant, dead stars



CHAPTER 4

OPTIONAL RULES FOR THE WEIRD WEST

The optional rules presented in this chapter are things you can try out for your game or ignore. Just because you like one option doesn't mean you have to use the others. And even if you try something out for your game, it might just be for a special session or two where using it will surprise and hopefully delight your players.

Some of the optional rules in this chapter deal with alternate ways to use a 52-card poker deck at the table (possibly the Midnight Deck), including actually playing real poker, generating 1–20 results using a card deck instead of dice, and more. Overall, the card rules are the most "meta" of the optional rules presented in this chapter.

The Midnight Deck is a special set of 52 cards produced alongside High Noon at Midnight.

Later optional rules provide additional tools to further extend a "weird west" feel into your game, including general survival rules, curses, vices, and tall tales.

OPTIONAL RULES

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PLAYING POKER

The most obvious way you'd use physical cards in a Cypher System game is by actually playing a few rounds of poker (like Texas hold 'em, five-card draw, and so on), blackjack, faro, or some other card game when the characters have gotten themselves into an especially important in-world card game.

Usually, this means that you, the GM, will be standing in for one or more NPCs. The upshot is that every NPC poker player effectively has the same skill playing the game as you have, regardless of how good the NPC should be according to their stats. The same may be true of players, but at least they're only simulating their single character; you could end up playing for multiple different NPCs over the course of a weird west campaign.

The following options can help you simulate different styles of play for different NPCs.

SIMULATING NPC POKER PLAYERS

Hard-bitten gamblers who make their living at the card tables fall into individual styles. A handful of play styles are recognized, categorized by a cardplayer's tendencies at various stages during a particular hand. The intricacies of those styles have their place, but not here.

Instead, this optional rule provides five streamlined and broad categories, paired with some guidance on how you as the GM can "cheat" to make a given NPC's play style more like the person you're standing in for at the table. Make sure to let players know you'll be using this method ahead of time, because otherwise some could misunderstand and think you're *actually* cheating, which wouldn't be fun for anyone.

NPC CARDPLAYER CATEGORIES

Ace: This NPC is an expert player who understands the intricacies of the game, how to bluff, and how to read the other players. They're one of the best card sharks the PCs are ever likely to face.

One way you can simulate this style of play is that **you get two extra cards** any time you draw cards for your hand, from which you can choose to make the best winning hand possible. For example, if you're playing Texas hold 'em, you'd get four private cards ("hole cards") instead of two that you'd use in combination with the community cards to make the best hand possible.

Reasonably Skilled: This NPC is pretty good. Good enough, anyhow, to keep playing the tables even after some bad hands.

If you consider yourself such a player, you could just play the game as usual. However, if you're somewhat new to the game, give this NPC the benefit of **one extra card** any time you draw cards to your hand, but otherwise play like you'd simulate an ace NPC poker player.

Cheat: This NPC is reasonably skilled at poker, but they also sometimes cheat. Give this NPC the benefit of **one extra card** any time you draw cards to your hand, but otherwise play like you'd simulate an ace NPC poker player.

Novice: This NPC is just learning the game and really doesn't have the experience to know how to consistently win. Most novices are quickly cleaned out and lose their seat at the table unless they have an especially large chip advantage.

If you're equally new to poker, you could just play the game as you can. However, if you're actually a better player than a novice, you'll have to handicap your play. That's easy enough; just don't choose the best hands and discard to lose, not win.

Maniac: An NPC "maniac" plays most hands, even with a weak hand, and usually bets as if they're going to win. This style leads to high variance, but in the long term, maniacs tend to lose lots of money.

An easy way to simulate this style is just play that way; don't fold, always call or raise the bet, and stay in the game as if you've got a winning hand.

Cheaters at card games in a weird west setting use all sorts of techniques to improve their odds, including "palming": concealing extra cards up their sleeves or in a specially prepared magical ring, then surreptitiously introducing them into their hand during play.

WINNING POKER HANDS

If you and your players are poker novices, but still want to play poker, there are hundreds of books, online tutorials, and real-life opportunities to figure out the game. But here's a handy reminder of the ten winning hands, in order of most winning to least. (If you'd rather not actually play poker or don't have a deck handy, check out the Evoking Poker With Dice optional rule.)

Royal Flush: Ace, King, Queen, Jack, and 10 of the same suit
Straight Flush: Five consecutive cards of the same suit, Aces high, such as 5, 4, 3, 2, and an Ace
Four of a Kind: Four cards of the same rank, such as four Aces or four Kings
Full House: Three cards of the same rank and two cards of another rank, such as three Aces and two Kings
Flush: Five cards of the same suit not in consecutive order, such as the 2, 5, 8, 10, and Queen of Guns
Straight: Five consecutive cards, Aces high, such as 8, 7, 6, 5, and 4, but not all of the same suit
Three of a Kind: Three cards of the same rank, such as three Aces or three Kings
Two Pair: Two cards of one rank and two cards of another rank, such as two Aces and two Kings
One Pair: One pair of cards of the same rank, such as a pair of Aces or a pair of Kings
High Card: The lowest possible hand, made up of five cards that do not produce any of the above combinations

PC SKILLS AND REAL POKER

It's possible that you'll end up playing a real game of poker, twenty-one, or another card game that corresponds to an in-world game between the PCs and one or more NPCs. In which case, your players' knowledge and ability to play the game will be literally on display.

The question is: Does an in-world character's training or specialization in poker (and similar games where bluffing is important, as is knowledge of the odds of what other players might be holding) affect the player's game of poker in the real world?

Your answer might be no. And that's great. Your players might not want it any other way.

But this optional rule gives players the opportunity to upgrade their chance of winning a hand or two if the character they're playing is skilled (while the player is more novice-level).

As with when you enhance your own skill using this technique, make sure that all the players understand what's going on—if one or more of the other players are using this rule to evoke the skill of their characters, they're not actually cheating.

Evoking Poker with Dice, page 56

MIDNIGHT DECK EQUIVALENCIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

The Midnight Deck is equivalent to a standard deck. Suit equivalencies and associations are as follows:

Gears (Diamonds): Gears are often linked to wealth, material possessions, and science.
Guns (Clubs): Guns are associated with power, authority, conflict, and threats.
Elixirs (Hearts): Elixirs are associated with imagination, enchantment, protection, and magic.
Eyes (Spades): Eyes are associated with death, misfortune, horror, and darkness.
Jackalopes (Jokers): Jackalopes are unexpected interlopers associated with surprise and trickery.

Inexpensive items, page 202

Moderately priced item, page 202

Trained in Poker: If the player's character is trained in poker, the player can choose to get an extra card when they draw cards for a hand, which they can use to make the best winning hand possible. The ability is usable once, but renews each time they lose a hand.

Specialized in Poker: If the player's character is specialized in poker, the player can choose to get two extra cards when they draw cards for a hand, which they can use to make the best winning hand possible. The ability is usable once, but renews each time they lose a hand.

Cheating: What if a player's character is something of an in-world cheat at poker, but a player doesn't have the skill to palm a card up their sleeve? Each time a player decides to use their character's ability to cheat, use the same rule as presented for a character trained or specialized in poker for a character trained or specialized in cheating at cards, respectively, with one additional caveat, as follows.

Each time a player relies on their character's cheating skill, they must succeed on a Speed-based task to cheat against the highest-level NPC playing (or closely observing) the game. On a failed roll, the NPC notices the cheat and probably calls out the character.

EVOKING POKER WITH DICE

In some situations, you may want to use Cypher System–adjacent rules to evoke a game of poker PCs play with one or more NPCs, rather than actually playing poker with cards. Here's a simple optional rule for doing just that. (For something even easier, see Even Quicker Poker Resolution With Dice.)

All dice rolls are made openly. In an actual game, players would hide their hole cards, but remember, this optional rule is for quick resolution, not exacting simulation. The rounds of betting that would normally occur and options for cardplayers to "develop" their hands come down to just a single roll under this procedure.

Developing is a term sometimes used to describe when a cardplayer tries to improve their hand by adding new cards to it to get a better final winning hand.

1) Ante/Blinds: Each PC adds in-world money to the pot—probably an inexpensive amount, though that can vary. (For simplicity's sake, hold 'em variations that include big and small blinds are rolled up into this step.)

2) Determine Hand Level: As the GM, you set the difficulty for the hand, which is equal to the level of the highest-level NPC—or their modification for poker skill—at the table. However, don't reveal that level until after PCs decide whether to stay in or fold. (If you want to increase the level of the hand later, you can do so as a GM intrusion.)

3) Set the Bet: You also set the bet, which could be a moderate or higher amount of money.

4) Stay or Fold: Once PCs know the bet, they can fold and leave the hand if they don't want to add that additional amount to the pot above the ante they've already paid. If they stay in, the character must commit the bet amount to the pot. (In an actual card game, cardplayers could also raise the bet that everyone else has to meet to stay in, but we're going for simplicity, and all those rounds are condensed into this single step.)

5) Resolve the Hand: PCs who are still in must succeed on an Intellect-based roll against the hand's difficulty. Skills related to playing poker apply to their roll, and the player can apply Effort.

6) Interpret Results: Use the following guidelines to figure out who wins the hand.

The PC with the highest result that beats the hand's level wins the hand and the amount in the pot goes to them.

If two or more PCs beat the hand's level and achieve the same result—say, both succeed on what would be a level 6 challenge—the pot for that round is split among those PCs.

If no PC beats the hand's level, the hand goes to the NPC at the table whose level in poker set the hand's level.

HANDS OF FATE

Is life utterly random or ruled by hidden fates? Either way, introducing the Hands of Fate optional rule gives PCs a bit more control over their situation while further investing them in a weird west feel. Here's how it works.

Deal Fate's Hand: At the beginning of each day (usually after players have completed a ten-hour recovery roll), deal each player two cards—these are their personal Hand of Fate cards. The hand doesn't exist in-world, but is instead a meta resource, to be used by the player for the benefit of their PC (sort of like XP).

Draw Community Cards: The first time the PCs have an encounter that day, draw three Hand of Fate community cards. These cards are placed face up on the table where all the players can see; all the players can use these community cards, combined with their personal Hand of Fate cards, to evaluate and eventually play their individual Hands of Fate. After you've dealt the first three community cards, draw and place one additional Hand of Fate community card each time a player triggers an intrusion or you intrude, until there are five community cards in total. These cards remain in play until a new day dawns or until all the players have played their individual Hands of Fate.

EVEN QUICKER POKER RESOLUTION WITH DICE

If the evoking poker with dice optional rule seems too much for your players' tastes, an entire poker game could be resolved by one roll against the hand's level, set by the level of the highest-level NPC (or their modification for poker). The PC with the highest result that beats the hand's level wins the hand and the amount in the pot goes to them.

If two or more PCs beat the hand's level and achieve the same result—say, both succeed on what would be a level 6 challenge—the pot for that round is split among those PCs.

If no PC beats the hand's level, the hand goes to the NPC at the table whose level in poker set the hand.

Play a Hand of Fate: After the first three Hand of Fate community cards are drawn, a player can, at any time, choose to play their Hand of Fate for the day, using any combination of personal and community cards. Their PC gains the benefit noted for their hand, or a lesser benefit that appears further on in the list.

Royal Flush (an Ace, King, Queen, Jack, and 10 all of the same suit): PC gains one benefit below and can be dealt another Hand of Fate for the day.

Straight Flush (five sequential cards, Aces high, all of the same suit): PC gains 1 XP (to keep or use like any XP).

Four of a Kind (four cards of the same value): PC can immediately take an action, even if they've already acted this round.

Full House (three of a kind and a pair): PC replaces a d20 roll (their own or another player's) with a 20.

Flush (five cards of the same suit): PC can apply three free levels of Effort to any one roll.

Straight (five sequential cards, Aces high, in sequence): PC can apply two free levels of Effort to any one roll.

Three of a Kind (three cards of the same value): PC can apply a free level of Effort to any one roll.

Two Pair (two cards of the same value, twice): PC regains 5 Pool points.

One Pair (two cards of the same value): PC regains 3 Pool points.

High Card (none of the above hands): PC regains 1 Pool point.

"Five Card Fiasco," page 192

Spec bets (short for "spectacle" bets) are unusual bets made during a poker game that count toward a player's bet, but are not money. Instead, they are rare items, deeds to property, favors, alchemical items, and so on. See the adventure "Five Card Fiasco" for examples of spec bets in play.

DECK AS D20

Rolling a d20 offers a consistent 5% chance to produce any number from 1 to 20.

This optional rule temporarily replaces player character d20 rolls with a card drawn from a specially constructed Midnight Deck (or standard 52-card deck) that grants the same probability. The idea is that using the deck instead of dice further steeps a game in weird west ambiance.

WHEN TO USE DECK AS D20

Evoking Poker With Dice, page 56

“Five Card Fiasco,” page 192

Ways to use this optional rule include:

Session: You could use the constructed “d20 deck” for part of a (or an entire) game session when playing in a *High Noon at Midnight* adventure or setting. For example, if a scenario asks characters to compete in an in-world game of poker (such as in the adventure “Five Card Fiasco”), you could ask PCs to draw from the d20 deck instead of rolling dice, especially if you’ve opted for evoking poker with dice instead of actually playing poker in-world.

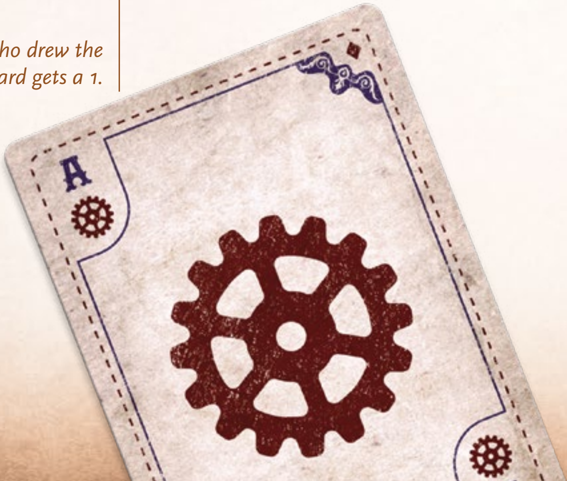
Special Moment: Alternatively, you could keep the constructed d20 deck in reserve, then pull it out for the PCs to draw from once or twice in a session at a pivotal point or fun moment in the game. This does some of the same ambiance-building work as the Full Session option, but also gives you more leeway to create a Loaded Deck.

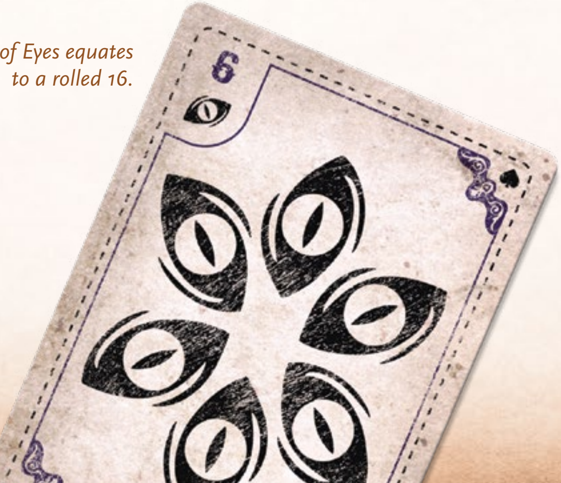
CONSTRUCT THE D20 DECK

Here’s how to construct a “d20 deck.”

1. Choose two suits, one red and one black—say, gears (diamonds) and eyes (spades).
2. Gather all the cards from each of your chosen suits from Ace to King, then discard the Jack, King, and Queen from each.
3. Combine the two sets of ten cards—this is your d20 deck!
4. Each card has an associated numerical value, as follows:

d20	Card Value
1	Ace of gears (diamonds)
2	2 of gears (diamonds)
3	3 of gears (diamonds)
4	4 of gears (diamonds)
5	5 of gears (diamonds)
6	6 of gears (diamonds)
7	7 of gears (diamonds)
8	8 of gears (diamonds)
9	9 of gears (diamonds)
10	10 of gears (diamonds)
11	Ace of eyes (spades)
12	2 of eyes (spades)
13	3 of eyes (spades)
14	4 of eyes (spades)
15	5 of eyes (spades)
16	6 of eyes (spades)
17	7 of eyes (spades)
18	8 of eyes (spades)
19	9 of eyes (spades)
20	10 of eyes (spades)


The character who drew the Ace of Gears card gets a 1.


6 of Eyes equates to a rolled 16.

USING THE D20 DECK

It's pretty simple.

Shuffle the Deck: Establish one shuffled deck as the deck that'll be used for generating random numbers for the whole table. (You could let each PC construct a d20 deck if you have enough card decks lying around, but it takes some time to construct each deck, so the payoff may not be worth it.)

Draw: When a character would normally roll (or you've decided it's a special moment), they draw a card from the top of the shuffled deck. The card drawn is the result the character obtains.

For example, if they draw a 6 of eyes (spades), their roll is a 16. If they draw a 6 of gears (diamonds), they get a 6.

Effort, Assets, Training: Characters still benefit from training, applying Effort, getting help from another character, and so on, just like normal, when they draw from the d20 deck.

Reshuffle After Every Draw: Once a given result is drawn, shuffle that card back into the deck before the next draw. It's important to follow this step each time or probabilities will become more and more skewed.

LOADED DECK

If you use a d20 deck only for specific moments, consider loading the deck to create the possibility of more interesting results, both good and bad.

More 1s and 20s: The easiest way to load the deck is to include another red suit Ace and another black suit 10—in the case of the Midnight deck (or standard deck), the ace of elixirs (hearts) and 10 of guns (clubs).

Red suit Aces (no matter the suit) correspond to getting a 1 on a draw, and black suit 10s (no matter the suit) correspond to getting a natural 20 on a draw.

Jackalopes/Jokers: The PCs will be surprised if they draw a jackalope (joker), especially if they think they understand how the constructed deck works. Add two jackalopes (jokers) to the loaded deck.

If the character draws a jackalope (joker), have them draw again without shuffling the jackalope back into the deck—they can keep that card for the rest of the encounter. The second card they draw is their actual result, unless it's another jackalope (joker), in which case, treat the two cards as if the character rolled a natural 1 and shuffle both cards back into the loaded deck.

If the character gets to keep a single jackalope (joker), they can choose to use it any time to take an extra turn during any given round (at which point the jackalope goes back into the loaded deck).

SHOWDOWN OPTIONAL RULE

Whether you're using regular dice or a d20 deck to generate numbers, consider the following initiative option that applies specifically during a showdown between a PC and an NPC (or more than one PC against multiple NPCs). In a showdown, each participant typically has a few moments to consider their opponent and the overall situation, and in the moment of drawing their shootin' iron, using what they notice for some sort of advantage.

Simply put, if the PC wins initiative, they can choose from one of the following benefits.

NPC Option: NPC initiative is already determined by their level or their initiative modifier. However, if they win, they gain the benefit instead of the PC or PCs.

Winning Initiative Benefits: The PC chooses one.

- At any point during the showdown, the character can make one extra attack.
- The character adds +1 to their gun damage during the showdown.
- The character gains an asset to their Speed defense during the showdown.
- At any point in the encounter, the character can treat one result as a natural 20. (If using the NPC option, an NPC hinders a PC's roll by three steps.)

A showdown has rules and rituals, including premeditation, a predetermined location where the duel will go down, and a time for the same. Any other kind of gunfight is just a spontaneous combat and doesn't benefit from the showdown optional rule.

CURSES OF THE WEIRD WEST

If you use this optional rule, hard-to-dispel curses exist in your setting.

Sometimes NPCs the PCs meet suffer from a curse, and that curse might confer upon them an unholy ability that makes it difficult for the PCs to deal with them. Other times, a PC might be cursed. Either way, PCs are probably interested in finding a way to break the curse.

Some curses are conferred by an individual, object, or location. For example, a deathbinder may curse a target they shoot with their soul pistol.

Deathbinder, page 90

Other times, evil deeds sour and rot the world, resulting in an affliction that can't be easily remedied.

Cursed: Some curses don't allow the character to make a defense roll to avoid them, especially if the character takes an action they know is wrong, such as killing an innocent, burning a bar, or tearing down a religious icon revered by many. But curses conferred on the PC by an NPC's attack should allow an appropriate defense roll.

If a character is cursed, they know it when it happens—a weird feeling comes over them, all the hairs rise on their arms and neck, they feel as if "someone walked over their grave," or something similar. However, they might not know the specific effect of the curse right away. Either way, if the character is a PC, they should get 2 XP as a GM intrusion when the curse overtakes them (1 of which they'll give away, as normal).

Breaking a Curse: Breaking a curse is sometimes simple, and other times more complex.

Simple Curse Breaking: Breaking a curse could be as straightforward as smashing, killing, dispelling, demolishing, or otherwise dealing with a physical object or creature that cursed the targeted character. For instance, if cursed by a deathbinder, breaking the curse means destroying the creature permanently.

Complex Curse Breaking: Some curses are more convoluted and require a specific course of action related to redressing the root transgression. Generally speaking, each solution is bespoke to the curse, and is something you can decide on based on how the curse came into being. Cursed PCs should have some means of figuring out what they must do—perhaps they could talk to an alchemist or someone else with magical skills, or succeed on a magical lore task to determine their options.

For instance, say a PC cheats at a game of cards, which leads an NPC who loses everything to an early grave. If the PC who cheated is cursed, the curse might be that they'll lose every game of chance they undertake afterward (which is pretty mild as these things go). As the GM, you might decide that breaking the curse requires the PC to return whatever they won off the dead NPC. Which is somewhat difficult given that the victim is no longer alive, but finding their grave and burying the objects (poker chips?) might be the first step in what needs to be done to break the curse. They might also need to summon the ghost and apologize, and perhaps even convince the ghost to forgive them.

CURSES AND INCITING INCIDENT

The following table describes an array of weird west curses. Use it for inspiration for curses PCs (or NPCs the characters meet) might suffer. The effect of the curse is listed, followed by a potential inciting incident in parentheses. If the curse is conferred by an individual, object, or something outside of the control of the cursed target in your game, ignore the parenthetical.

d100	Curse and Cause
01–03	Everyone the target kills eventually rises as a zombie and comes after target (killed someone to attain vengeance)
04–06	Target never gets the draw—always loses initiative—in a gunfight (stray bullet killed a child)
07–09	Target bleeds from eyes and ears near chapels and other spiritual places, taking 1 point of ambient damage each round within long range (destroyed a religious icon)
10–12	Target's footsteps burn with fire and brimstone; a huge fire risk and impossible to hide presence (burned a home with a family inside)
13–15	Target compelled to challenge one person to a drinking match each night (killed/allowed deadly harm to befall a drinking companion)
16–18	Target must eat all food served them no matter how much or how fit it is to be eaten (accidentally/purposefully let an animal/person starve)
19–21	Target has no face, just a blank expanse of skin (insults about another's appearance contributed to their death)
22–24	Target must kill someone each day or the Devil comes for their soul (made a crossroads deal)
25–27	Target falls asleep once during any fight (slept on guard duty, resulting in companion's death)
28–30	Target's touch freezes, causing food and drink to freeze solid, risking harm to friends, etc. (inattention/direct actions caused animal/person to die of exposure to the cold)
31–33	Demonic bull hunts the target every night (rustled cattle)
34–36	Horrific nightmares degrade target's sleep such that they are always one step down the damage track (ran instead of helping allies in a deadly fight they lost)
37–39	Target is accident-prone, suffering at least one level 5 accident a day (tripped companion died)
40–42	Target who doesn't sleep in a real grave does not gain the benefit of associated ten-hour recovery roll (robbed a grave)
43–45	Wild animals constantly find and attack target (hunted for sport, not for food and resources)
46–48	Target's tongue is a venomous snake that sometimes gets loose (lie led to someone's death)
49–51	Target's touch is venomous; venom sometimes spreads to food and objects (killed an innocent spider)
52–54	Target's reflection sometimes attacks them (vandalized/robbed a home and broke some mirrors)
55–57	Every mount the target rides quickly comes to a bad end (rode a mount to death)
58–60	Target sleepwalks, possessed by a hex gunner (stole an object that belonged to spirit)
61–63	Target breaks into coyote-like howls when trying to speak (ran over a coyote with mount/wagon)
64–66	Hanged corpses that "see" target break their ropes and attack with deadshot stats (let an innocent hang in their place)
67–69	Target only gets nutrition from human flesh and bones (forced to eat a companion to live)
70–72	Target's skin becomes stiff and rusted like iron, hindering all physical tasks (killed a blacksmith)
73–75	Precious metals handled by/near target turn to lead (jumped a prospector's claim)
76–78	Target is cursed with lycanthropy; regularly becomes a vicious werewolf (hunted for sport, let the wolf pelt rot)
79–81	Target loses every bet, every gamble, every wager (cheated a demon at cards)
82–84	Target's flesh is constantly dripping a foul ordure, hindering pleasant social interaction by two steps (actions led to someone drowning in a cesspit)
85–87	Target's attacks tend to ricochet; at least one attack rebounds on target per conflict (ricochet killed a bystander)
88–90	Target grows a second head each night, which detaches on scorpion legs and attacks anyone (including target) nearby (killed an alchemist)
91–93	Target is sometimes pulled into a dark dimension (left a companion to die in the dark)
94–96	Target wakes up after some ten-hour recovery rolls buried in a coffin within long range of where they went to sleep (actions led to someone being buried alive)
97–00	Target exudes darkness, filling a short area around them; candles, torches, lanterns, and even electric lights only illuminate an immediate distance (blinded someone)

Zombie, page 371

Zombie, Cypher System Bestiary, page 170

Deadshot, page 87

Werewolf, page 367

Werewolf, Cypher System Bestiary, page 65

Head on scorpion legs: *level 3; on failed Might defense roll, stinger deals an additional 3 Speed damage (ignores Armor)*

Dark dimension: *level 3; occupants take 3 Intellect damage (ignores Armor) each round until they can escape with an Intellect-based roll as their action*

Demonic bull: *level 5; health 33; gores twice each round for 6 damage each; if killed, returns to life next midnight*

Hex gunner, page 88

SURVIVAL

Weird west wilderness landscapes can be punishing places normally, but become especially so when hardship strikes. Even the prepared can find themselves caught out, lost, or with dead mounts and no easy way to escape endless badlands, deserts, or even prairielands without food, water, and shelter for any number of reasons—a ghost rider destroyed their caravan, outlaws left them to die, demons came in the night and killed the horses, and so on.

You can use this optional rule if the PCs find themselves in such a situation. Obtaining food, water, and shelter is the difference between life and death. Otherwise PCs face situations where they are too hot and/or too cold, and where they suffer dehydration and/or starvation. Well, they might face those situations anyway, but hopefully through their desperate actions, they'll come out the other side.

Starvation: Generally, a PC can survive without food for about ten days to several weeks. In game terms, PCs who go without food take 3 points of ambient damage each day. On any day a PC has taken starvation damage, their tasks are hindered (even if the character makes a recovery roll to regain lost Pool points). In addition, after seven days without food, a starving character must make a level 5 Might defense roll each day that follows. On a failed roll, the character descends one step on the damage track.

SURVIVAL GM INTRUSIONS

- PCs camp on an unmarked grave and a vengeful ghost attempts to possess a PC
- The helpful stranger who offers to lead the PCs to safety turns out to be something sinister
- The old fort the PCs find that seemed so hopeful turns out to be a chupacabra lair
- A pack of dire coyotes begins howling in the night; they've caught the PCs' scent
- Red mists, swarming insects, a freak cold snap, etc. hinder PCs' foraging/trapping tasks by two steps
- Spores from strange fungus infect gathered food, causing PCs to fall into a disturbing sleep

Badlands, page 47

Deserts, page 49

Prairielands, page 48

Ghost rider, page 89

Too Hot, page 49

Too Cold, page 52

Dehydration, page 49

Ghost, page 331

Chupacabra, page 79

Dire coyote, page 80

Disturbing sleep: *level 5; PCs take 1 Intellect damage (ignores Armor) each minute asleep but can attempt an Intellect defense roll each minute to wake*

Cursed beasts, page 79

Ghost, Cypher System Bestiary, page 44

HUNTING, TRAPPING, AND FINDING SHELTER

Generally, characters must spend at least four hours of any given day foraging, hunting, and trapping, then succeed on a level 5 Intellect task. The task is eased for someone trained in identifying plants and creatures, navigation, or specifically in wilderness survival. On a success, enough food and water is obtained to sustain a group of five or six characters for one day.

A separate level 5 Intellect task is required to find shelter after about four hours of searching, though time spent hunting and trapping also counts toward keeping an eye out for suitable campsites and materials that a shelter can be made from.

FOOD AND WATER

Food is some combination of foraged plants and roots, and hunted and/or trapped game.

Specific foraged edible plants could include ramps, prairie turnips, cactus pads, clover, sotol (a desert plant), mushrooms, and so on.

Specific hunted and/or trapped game could include bison, jackrabbits, quail, prairie dogs, coyotes, and if especially desperate, one or more cursed beasts. Once found, the food is best if dressed and cooked, though especially desperate people can still gain the benefit of food if it's not cooked.

Water is usually found in cricks, springs, or small lakes; collected in deep rock cavities or caves; or even collected from morning dew. Water should be boiled when possible—otherwise PCs risk catching dysentery (and similar diseases). Water that isn't boiled doesn't automatically mean PCs are exposed to the disease, but it's common enough.

Dysentery (level 4 disease): People exposed to dysentery come down with severe diarrhea and cramps on a failed Might defense roll. After several hours, all their tasks are hindered by two steps. Each day, an infected character must succeed on a Might defense roll or suffer 4 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor). If a target succeeds on three Might defense rolls, they get better.

SHELTER

Depending on the area, shelter could be obtained by digging into hillsides, finding caves, pulling up sod to use as insulation, collecting deadfall or cutting saplings to create a tent-like structure (made all the better if hide from slaughtered game is available), digging a trench or cave in a snow bank, and if nothing else serves, at least finding some shade at high noon.

TALL TALES

The weird west is particularly fertile ground for tall tales and folklore, especially since it's possible that parts of fanciful stories may actually be true. In any event, given the kind of activity PCs are likely to accomplish, tall tales may come to be told about them.

If you're interested in using this optional rule, here's how it works.

GROWING REPUTATION

Beginning at tier 3 or later, PCs have been active in the setting long enough that tall tales start being told about the group. That's especially true if the characters have interacted with NPCs who know a little about the characters and their exploits.

However, a tall tale grows in the telling. Whatever exploit is being recounted should include an exaggeration or two, if not at least one outright fabrication.

General examples of tall tales include the following, but tall tales that include the PCs should be customized to their particular experience, and not all tall tales put the subject in a positive light (though many do).

d10	Tall Tale
1	Raised by magical winds, the characters once roped a tornado to avert disaster.
2	The characters are able to grow to giant stature, such that lakes form in their footprints.
3	Hard-hearted survivalists, the characters avoided starvation by eating everyone else in town.
4	Able to invoke the elements, the characters mowed down a forest by blowing on it.
5	Raised by storms, the characters ride cyclones and dust devils instead of horses.
6	Keen-eyed as the sun, the characters can shoot a bull between the eyes from miles away.
7	Stronger than iron, the characters chewed through the steel bars to escape jail.
8	Able to outsmart privation, the characters wrung water from a wet rock.
9	Loud as thunder, the characters once killed an outlaw with their booming voices alone.
10	Heartless and cruel, the characters once drowned an entire mining camp just for sport.

TALL TALE DETERMINATION

PCs first learn they're featured in at least one tall tale because they overhear someone in a saloon, on a train, or in some other social gathering telling a story that includes elements they personally remember.

Tall tales may spring up about the PCs a couple of different ways.

GM Fiat: Based on the actions of PCs who are at least tier 3, you craft a tall tale and set it loose in the campaign.

Player Intrusion: A PC of at least tier 3 may gain the benefits of a tall tale for one particular encounter if they use a player intrusion; however, this tall tale does not catch on—it's later recognized as utterly untrue or otherwise gutters out.

Long-Term Benefit: A PC of at least tier 3 may spend 3 XP to gain a long-term benefit in the form of a tall tale about their character. The rest of the PCs aren't featured in this tall tale unless they all do the same.

Long-Term Benefits, page 239

BENEFITS OF TALL TALES

Even if folks don't fully believe the tall tales told about the PCs, the mere fact that the stories persist gives the PCs the following benefits.

Reputation: When PCs are first recognized by NPCs familiar with the tall tale (and most are, unless they're isolated), PCs' very first interaction task (whether positive or negative) is eased by three steps. Once the shock of recognizing the PCs wears off a round later, future interaction tasks with the same NPCs are eased by one step.

Tall Tale Perks: When PCs are recognized, people do favors for the characters. For instance, they can be seated at any card game, see the mayor at any hour, secure an invitation to any show or gathering, reserve a seat on any train or coach, throw together a posse of enthusiastic folks, or get into any saloon, joy house, or club, no matter how exclusive.

Posses gathered by celebrity PCs using Tall Tale Perks number about ten to fifteen level 2 NPCs and last for about a day or until the posse accomplishes the stated goal, whichever comes sooner.

Enthrall, page 136

Captivate With Starshine, page 118

Retelling the Tale: If the PCs wish, they can tell the tall tale from their own perspective. Whether or not they stick closer to the truth or invent even more outrageous events is up to them. Either way, for as long as at least one PC is telling the story and listeners are not harmed, they keep the attention of all level 2 or lower NPCs who can hear them. If they have the Enthrall ability, they can captivate level 3 or lower NPCs. And if they have the Captivate With Starshine ability, they can captivate level 4 or lower NPCs.

DOWNSIDES OF TALL TALES

Being famous has its drawbacks, and tall tales in particular can draw trouble. Introduce any of the following situations as group (or individual, if appropriate) GM intrusions.

Hex gunner, page 88

Wild one: *level 5, wilderness and magical lore as level 7; health 24; Armor 1; batters foes twice as their action*

d10	Consequence of Tall Tale Acclaim
1	A newspaper exposé is published about the PCs' exploits, painting them in an unflattering light.
2	A 10-foot (3 m) tall humanoid covered in hair as thick as fur—a wild one—begins stalking PCs.
3	Misanthropes arrive and begin making all sorts of hateful comments about the PCs.
4	Someone tells an alternate tall tale painting PCs as ruthless outlaws; folks begin to shun PCs.
5	Relatives of one or more PCs come under scrutiny and harassment by fame chasers.
6	Federal marshals attempt to press-gang PCs into service to face a horrific threat.
7	A hex gunner decides the PCs aren't all that and challenges one character to a showdown.
8	A former friend and/or ally no longer wants anything to do with the PCs.
9	Thieves try to claim all the riches they believe the PCs have for themselves.
10	Fame chasers break in on the PCs during important negotiations.

PARANORMAL VICES OF THE WEIRD WEST

Fair warning, pardner—if you ain't careful, grifters, drunkards, and rabble-rousers will drag you to Perdition. 'Cept some folks never seem to suffer from their own impure actions—and not even they really know why.

A vice is behavior that many consider immoral or wicked. In some times and places, one person's vice is another's completely healthy pastime, if not taken to an extreme. But taking it to the extreme is what vices in the weird west rely on to empower them.

Characters that lean into vice in a weird west setting gain advantages above and beyond mere pleasure in the pursuit of their debauchery. One of those advantages is seeming immunity from the downsides such degeneracy eventually exacts on longtime indulgers. At least, they evade consequences for a lot longer than seems possible, until the force the PCs have unintentionally connected themselves to decides otherwise.

NPCs With Paranormal Vices: It could turn out that PC activity is too "pure" to warrant a mystical connection to invisible forces of oblivion, entropy, lies, and so on. In that case, the PCs might well encounter the rare NPC that always at least breaks even in poker (a Cardsharp), can drink anyone under the table and only seem steadier and more unflinching (an Inebriate), or can talk someone else out of their hat and spurs and be thanked for it (a Shyster). (In effect, the NPC has one or more supernatural vice abilities; determining how they work from an NPC point of view may require some creative interpretation on your part as the GM.)

PARANORMAL VICE ORIGINS

How an indulged vice imbues the devotee with inhuman power is not well understood, even by the few alchemists aware of the phenomenon. The current hypothesis is that indulging a vice acts like a ritual of worship that connects someone with a primordial avatar or power. These mysterious mystic forces lie on the edges of existence, normally hidden in the deeps of time.

DEVELOPING A PARANORMAL VICE

A PC might develop a paranormal vice in a manner similar to one of the ways a character can become cursed—as a result of poor choices. In this case, ongoing dedication to drinking, gambling, or swindling might forge a linkage to an invisible force related to the individual activity. A force that encourages that vice, knowing that with continued use, the pinhole connection it's forged to the world will grow.

When a character gains a vice with ties to a primordial power source, the character knows it. The revelation comes to them as a sort of waking dream where they see a version of themself cloaked in flame, shadow, ice, blades, or some other dramatic energy, standing ascendent while engaging in their vice. It feels like a promise of future glory. And with that promise, the character gains some understanding about how their paranormal vice functions.

MECHANICS OF A PARANORMAL VICE

There are positives and negatives associated with a paranormal vice.

Paranormal Abilities: A character with a paranormal vice gains additional abilities via their connection to a primordial power, as noted under each vice. Make just a couple of the indicated abilities available to the character initially, but give them one more each time they increase their connection with a low connection roll.

Repercussions From a Connection: Over time, a connection grows between a character's paranormal vice and the mysterious force behind it. Repercussions sometimes manifest depending on the character's connection roll.

Connection Roll: Each time a character with a paranormal vice uses one of their abilities, they must make 1d10 connection roll. On a connection roll of 1, the connection range increases by 1, and the character suffers a repercussion (see hereafter). For instance, if a character rolls a 1, the next time they make a connection roll, a connection occurs on a roll of 1–2. If a connection is made, the associated repercussion occurs immediately (but the character also gains the benefit of the ability that triggered it during the same period, if applicable).

If the connection range reaches 1–6, the character suffers the final repercussion.

Repercussions and final repercussions are noted under each paranormal vice.

Perdition, page 172

Connection rolls function in some ways like artifact depletion rolls.

Curses of the Weird West, page 60

One drink is equal to a shot of whiskey, a glass of wine, or a pint of beer.

ILL EFFECTS OF DRINKING

Someone who drinks too much in the short term descends one or more steps on the intoxication track. (Someone who drinks too much in the longer term risks alcoholism, liver disease, cancer, and an early death.)

INTOXICATION TRACK

The intoxication track has five states: sober, tipsy, inebriated, passed out, and hungover.

Each time a character has more than one drink in an hour, they must succeed on a Might defense roll. On a failed roll, they descend a step on the track (except as noted). The difficulty of the Might defense roll starts at 3, increasing by 1 for each additional drink taken during the same hour, or while the character is down one or more steps on the intoxication track.

Sober is the normal state for characters who haven't been drinking and who aren't hungover.

Tipsy characters are those who've started to feel one or two drinks. Tipsy characters can apply a free level of Effort to positive social interaction tasks, but must spend 1 extra point per level of Effort applied to any other task. For example, applying one level of Effort costs 4 points instead of 3, and applying two levels of Effort costs 7 points instead of 5.

If a tipsy character has no more drinks, they return to sober in about an hour and probably won't become hungover.

Inebriated characters' tasks are hindered by two steps. Inebriated characters must spend 1 extra point per level of Effort applied to any task.

The GM should also intrude on an inebriated character at least once to afflict them with the accidents that beset drunks, ranging from something as simple as an accidental fall onto their face, the character finding themself throwing a drunken tantrum over some perceived (but not actual) slight, or blacking out and waking up hours later in the town jail.

If an inebriated character has no more drinks, they return to sober in about three hours and must succeed on a Might defense roll against a difficulty of 3 + the number of drinks consumed. On a failure, the character instead moves to the hungover step on the track.

Passed out means a character is unconscious, or as good as.

A passed-out character won't revive on their own for four to eight hours. When they do revive, they descend the track to hungover. If roused earlier by shaking and/or slapping (or by taking damage), the character wakes but returns to inebriated status.

Characters who passed out don't remember what happened while they were inebriated, or if they do, only as unconnected flashes.

Hungover characters feel horrible and their tasks are hindered. A hangover lasts six to twelve hours, or until a character has "hair of the dog" (at least one drink).

> "No man can walk out of his own story."
>
> —Spirit of the West, in *Rango*

DRINKING

A person with this vice is called an Inebriate.

Libations are celebrations in a glass for some, fortitude and confidence for others, or both at once. Best not to be stingy with the liquor! For an Inebriate, alcohol means transcending everyday existence. Graced by the spirits consumed, inhibitions dissolve and the Inebriate is set adrift on a sea of euphoria—or, for some, unstoppable rage.

Related Vices: A character who overindulges in some other drug—like laudanum, opium, tobacco, and patent medicines like "Doctor Good" (derived from cocaine, opium, and alcohol)—could gain a paranormal vice with the same characteristics as an Inebriate.

INEBRIATE ABILITIES

An Inebriate gains the following abilities, drawn from some inscrutable, invisible source.

Make just a couple of the indicated abilities available to the character initially, but give them one more each time they increase their connection with a low connection roll.

Triggering Inebriate Abilities: Some Inebriate abilities require the Inebriate to throw back a drink (as part of the same action, or as a separate action, as noted) to gain the effect, which means the character needs to have access to alcohol. Each time an ability is used (including enablers), the Inebriate must roll 1d10 to check for a connection.

○ **Deadeye:** For ten minutes, the Inebriate eases ranged attacks. Drink (separate action) to activate.

○ **Hair-Trigger Reflexes:** The Inebriate adds a free level of Effort to initiative tasks. Enabler.

○ **Iron Liver:** When they wish, an Inebriate doesn't suffer ill effects of alcohol, including descending steps on the intoxication track (see boxed text). Instead, they can put down shot after shot of whiskey or other drink with no apparent effect, other than being able to access the abilities noted. Enabler.

○ **Mean Drunk:** For one minute, the Inebriate's ranged attacks deal 1 additional point of damage. Drink (part of same action) to activate.

○ **Unflinching:** For ten minutes, the Inebriate gains +1 to Armor and eases Might defense rolls by two steps. For the same period, the Inebriate gains one extra step on the damage track called **hurt**, which is effectively the same as hale but a bit rougher looking. Drink (separate action) to activate.

INEBRIATE REPERCUSSIONS

An Inebriate faces the following repercussions each time they roll a 1 (or higher, if previously triggered) on a connection roll. The repercussions flow from the same inhuman powers granting them their abilities. Each repercussion also increases the connection range by 1.

d6	Inebriate Repercussions
1	*Blind in One Eye.* The character loses vision from one eye for one hour. During this period, a burning, alien eye looks out from the character's eye socket instead of their own, and their sight-based tasks are hindered. The alien eye has Armor 10 and rarely blinks.
2	*Liquor Purge.* All the alcohol the character carries or touches for the next hour turns to dust—the character can't benefit from Inebriate abilities for that hour. During that same hour, a penumbra (a shadow's edge) shrouds the character so they seem weirdly dim, as if standing half in shadow even in bright light.
3	*Infectious Intoxication.* A nearby ally descends one step on the intoxication track. While the ally remains intoxicated, the character can't look at them or say their name.
4	*Worm From the Bottle.* The character loses the ability to speak for ten minutes. Instead, an echoing voice that sounds like dark liquid rushing down a waterfall laughs and titters, sometimes threatening others, other times launching into obscenity-laden tirades.
5	*Rampage.* A drunken rage overtakes the character, during which time their entire face seems to be replaced by an alien, inhuman mask. While enraged, the character must attack the closest creature in short range each round (whether ally, foe, or a stranger), until they can succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect defense roll to end the effect.
6	*Retching Summons.* Character upchucks a horrific quantity of gelatinous goo that animates as an insidious thing (a horrifying mass of writhing, slapping, undulating tentacles twice the size of a person) that attacks everyone.
Final	Character vanishes, leaving behind clothing and possessions sopping wet with rancid whiskey. Depending on the campaign or setting, this summons an avatar of oblivion into the physical world—whatever that means for your game.

Insidious thing: *level 5; health 18; attacks with toothed tentacles; where damaged, target's skin is discolored for several weeks*

GAMBLING

A person with this vice is called a Cardsharp.

The promise of untold riches lies beyond the next card flip, dice roll, or spin of the wheel. Why sleep when one could be playing a game with a huge pot? For a Cardsharp, cards are weapons and dice are life. The whims of fate are nothing against their seemingly infallible luck. As stakes rise and tension mounts, a Cardsharp sees their opponents stripped bare, their true selves revealed as they gamble all their wealth away.

Related Vices: Cardsharps are usually cardplayers (or dice players). But anyone who bets on the outcome of some event, such as stagecoach races, showdowns, or even flips of a coin might do it often enough to connect to the otherworldly and gain a paranormal vice.

CARDSHARP ABILITIES

A Cardsharp gains the following abilities, drawn from some inscrutable, invisible source.

Make just a couple of the indicated abilities available to the character initially, but give them one more each time they increase their connection with a low connection roll.

Triggering Cardsharp Abilities: Some Cardsharp abilities require the Cardsharp to flip a coin, card, or die (as part of the same action, or a separate action, as noted) to gain the effect. Each time an ability is used (including enablers), the Cardsharp must roll 1d10 to check for a connection.

Playing Real Poker: If a real game of poker is being played around the table to evoke a game of poker being played in-world, a Cardsharp player may accrue the same benefits as a player whose character is skilled in poker: the player should gain the benefit described under Specialized in Poker. After each hand the benefit is gained, a connection roll must be made.

If the Cardsharp has Uncanny Luck or a similar ability in addition to Cardsharp's Luck, it's the Cardsharp's choice (no roll required) whether they get a minor effect, a major effect, or a free activation of one of their tier 1–3 focus abilities.

PC Skills and Real Poker, page 55

Specialized in Poker, page 56

A PC that is already specialized in poker and is a Cardsharp gains three cards instead of two with each new hand.

○ **Breaking Even:** When they wish, a Cardsharp doesn't walk away from a game or bet having lost any money. They may not have any winnings, either (especially if they didn't use their Cardsharp abilities), but at least they're not out any money. The specific mechanism of how this happens varies by game and circumstance, but somehow, the invisible force associated with the Cardsharp tweaks the situation so the Cardsharp breaks even. Enabler.

○ **Cardsharp's Luck:** When the Cardsharp rolls for a task and succeeds, they roll again. If the second number rolled is higher than the first, they get a minor effect. If they roll the same number again, they get a major effect. Enabler.

○ **Deck to Hand:** The Cardsharp gains a new deck of cards, set of dice, coin to flip, or other small gambling token required for the game at hand. How the Cardsharp gains the object varies—someone may give the deck, dice, or coin to the Cardsharp, the Cardsharp could find an extra one in their clothing, or it could just turn up. Action (obviously not one requiring an associated drawn card, dice throw, or coin flip).

○ **Entropy's Luck:** If the Cardsharp fails on a task, they can change the die result to a natural 20; however, when they do so, a repercussion is also automatically triggered. Enabler.

○ **Shuffle Wizard:** For ten minutes, the Cardsharp gains +1 to Speed Edge and eases Speed defense rolls by two steps. Tasks to distract onlookers by the Cardsharp's ability to shuffle and manipulate cards are also eased by two steps. Draw card, throw dice, or flip coin (each a separate action) to activate.

CARDSHARP REPERCUSSIONS

A Cardsharp faces the following repercussions each time they roll a 1 (or higher, if previously triggered) on a connection roll. The repercussions flow from the same inhuman powers granting them their abilities. Each repercussion also increases the connection range by 1.

d6	Cardsharp Repercussions
1	*Stone Hand*. The character loses the use of one hand for one hour. During this period, physical tasks requiring two hands are hindered and the character's hand and forearm appears as if replaced with an oversized chunk of crimson stone.
2	*Card Fire*. Whatever the character carries to generate random results (cards, dice, coins, etc.) and all similar material within immediate range goes up in flames, sending tongues of choking smoke into the air. The Cardsharp and anyone else in immediate range takes 5 points of ambient damage.
3	*Loser.* A nearby ally loses big on a bet, and the Cardsharp forgets that ally's name and existence for an hour. If no ally is betting, the Cardsharp loses their stake (despite their Breaking Even ability) and passes out for an hour, during which time they cannot be roused.
4	*Joker.* For one hour, the Cardsharp's features are muted in a penumbra (a shadow's edge) so their face is weirdly dim, even in bright light. During this period, anything the Cardsharp says always concludes with a threat of horrific violence against whoever the Cardsharp is addressing.
5	*Ace of Guns.* Straining probability, a bullet from a distant gunfight ricochets into the area and off several walls, attacking the Cardsharp and up to five nearby people as a level 5 attack.
6	*Queen of Gears.* The Cardsharp's eyes blaze with purple radiance, animating a nearby stove, grandfather clock, or other mechanism as a forgeborn (somewhat resembling the queen of gears card) that attacks everyone.
Final	Character vanishes, leaving behind clothing and possessions, but only smoking holes where dice, cards, or coins may have once been carried. Depending on the campaign or setting, this summons an avatar of entropy into the physical world—whatever that means for your game.

Forgeborn, queen of gears: *level 4; Armor 2; two bashing attacks*

SWINDLING

A person with this vice is called a Shyster.

They're tricksters, but who doesn't love a good trick? Shysters are mirage merchants who tell others what they most wish to hear. The truth is harsh—and made harsher when a lie is exposed—which is why a Shyster's honeyed words are so potent that those who've been duped (call 'em marks) often refuse to believe anything other than the beautiful tapestry of fiction. The mark may even work to explain away the difference between the lie they want to believe and the cold reality of a Shyster's grift.

SHYSTER ABILITIES

A Shyster gains the following abilities, drawn from some inscrutable, invisible source.

Make just a couple of the indicated abilities available to the character initially, but give them one more each time they increase their connection with a low connection roll.

Triggering Shyster Abilities: Some Shyster abilities require the Shyster to demonstrate a minor tell such as a wink, raised eyebrow, or quick quirk of the mouth (as part of the same action) to gain the effect, as indicated. Despite the tell, the supernatural nature of the ability means most people still don't realize they're being swindled.

Each time an ability is used (including enablers), the Shyster must roll 1d10 to check for a connection.

Convincing Lie: For ten minutes, the Shyster gains +1 to Intellect Edge and eases Intellect defense rolls by two steps. Deception tasks are eased by two steps. Wink, raise an eyebrow, or quirk mouth (part of same action) to activate.

Evade All Consequence: A mark who finally realizes that they've been conned by the Shyster doesn't come looking for revenge if the Shyster doesn't want them to. The Shyster may not have succeeded in their confidence game, especially if they didn't use their Shyster abilities, but at least their bones remain unbroken. The specific mechanism of how all consequences are evaded varies by game and circumstance, but somehow, the invisible hand of fate tweaks the situation so the Shyster isn't taken in or hurt. Enabler.

WANT
HEF
REWARD

Quick Thinking: If a Shyster succeeds on an Intellect defense roll for any reason, they gain an action. They can use it immediately even if they have already taken a turn (or multiple turns) in the round, but each use requires a connection roll. Enabler.

Shyster's Face: The Shyster's face seems to peel away and reforms in some other guise, allowing them to hide their identity or attempt to impersonate someone else, granting two assets to any tasks involving disguise for one hour. Wink, raise an eyebrow, or quirk mouth (part of same action) to activate.

Won't Be Fooled Again: For the next day, the Shyster isn't conned by someone else's grift. Wink, raise an eyebrow, or quirk mouth (as an action) to activate.

OTHER PARANORMAL VICES

Other vices could be linked to hidden powers that seek a connection to those who "worship" them by overindulging. For instance, the "seven deadly sins" could be candidates for paranormal vices. You can work these up, using the examples already provided by Inebriates, Cardsharps, and Shysters as a template.

SHYSTER REPERCUSSIONS

A Shyster faces the following repercussions each time they roll a 1 (or higher, if previously triggered) on a connection roll. The repercussions flow from the same inhuman powers granting them their abilities. Each repercussion also increases the connection range by 1.

d6	Shyster Repercussions
1	*Unbroken Skin.* The character can't speak or make vocal noise for one hour. During this period, their mouth and vocal cords simply don't exist; instead, the Shyster's lower face features unbroken skin without evidence of hinging jaws.
2	*Banned Words.* Some combinations of syllables are subconsciously avoided because they resonate with primordial words of power. For a moment, something the Shyster says evokes such a word (level 5 effect), dealing 5 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) to themself and everyone within audible range. Everyone affected suffers an optical migraine, hindering sight-based tasks for one hour.
3	*Swindled by Reality.* An important piece of equipment such as a favorite suit, weapon, or magical artifact goes missing, apparently stolen by a master thief (but actually taken by some kind of manifestation or avatar of lies).
4	*The Truth Hurts.* For the next few hours, any time the Shyster speaks the truth, they take 2 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and everyone hears a lie determined by the GM (but usually the opposite of what the Shyster meant).
5	*Truth Spasm.* For the next few hours, any time anyone within audible range of the Shyster speaks the truth, a penumbra (a shadow's edge) briefly dims the speaker's face and they suffer a horrific vision of the people, places, or things they were speaking of falling into ruin. The affected character takes 2 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) each time, too.
6	*Ghostly Retribution.* A ghost of someone who died on account of the Shyster's lies (or any lie told by anyone) is summoned and attacks everyone.
Final	Character vanishes, leaving behind clothing and possessions, but no hint of any identifying papers and belongings. Depending on the campaign or setting, this summons an avatar of lies into the physical world—whatever that means for your game.

Ghost, page 331

Ghost, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 44*

CHAPTER 5

THREATS AND HAZARDS OF THE WEIRD WEST

Characters traveling the weird west face all kinds of challenges and dangers. These include outlaws, undead (called necrovores in The Ghost Range), harsh wilderness conditions, and often enough, inexplicable and uncanny phenomena that afflict the landscape, whether out in the wilderness or in town.

Necrovore, page 89

The Ghost Range, page 144

Wilderness, page 46

In Town, page 39

Outlaws: *level 2; when working as a group of at least five, the outlaws make two level 5 long-ranged rifle attacks each round that deal 5 damage each*

SURVEY OF WEIRD WEST THREATS AND HAZARDS

If you're looking for ideas to challenge your PCs who are between jobs or who've become complacent while riding into the sunset, look no further than this here table. Those spire-like stones could be something other than strictly natural, giant scorpions are more common than most folks think, the Tomb Moon might eclipse the sun, or the characters could just discover that their mounts have been sickened by bad water. All these—plus many other additional dangers you could throw at the PCs—are presented in this chapter.

Curses, page 60

Roll doo to find the threat or hazard, or choose one from the list

01–03 Scorpion Vanguard (level 4): Thousands of normal scorpions roll across the road, room, or area, dealing 1 point of damage to every creature and, on a failed Might defense roll, dazing targets (hindering their tasks) with pain for one round. A round later, a few giant scorpions follow.

Giant scorpion: *level 3; poison stinger deals additional 3 Speed damage (ignores Armor) on failed Might defense roll*

04–06 Washed-Out Passage (level 3): The stage road, train track, bridge, or other passage ahead is washed out, requiring hours of repair—assuming tools are even available.

> Ain't no taming the wild. And that goes double when the wild's got a mind of its own.

07–09 Ambush (level 5): As Washed-Out Passage, but a group of eight outlaws wait in hiding to ambush whoever finds their passage blocked; the bandits created the blockade, and can reopen the way relatively quickly.

10–12 Haunted Coach (level 5): A derelict coach pulled by four skeletal horses (level 2) comes up alongside the characters. The coach is haunted by a spirit that demands the characters race it back to town (or other location); if PCs refuse, they risk becoming cursed.

13–15 Dust devil herd (level 3): A herd of dust devils blows through a long area, taking several rounds to pass. Each round, creatures in the area take 3 points of damage on a failed Speed defense roll due to failing to escape a zigzagging dust devil; those damaged must also succeed on a Might defense roll or be blinded by dust for several rounds.

16–18 Nightmare Hoodoo (level 3): An irregular series of rocky spires with unlikely shapes, including boulder-like formations balanced on thinner spires, is suffused with the undead mind of an ancient entity. Those who spend more than a few rounds within long range of the spires take 3 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) on a failed Intellect defense roll as horrific nightmares overtake their waking minds.

19–21 Nightmare Storm (level 3): An effect like that produced by a Nightmare Hoodoo, but this one moves across the landscape as a horrific psychic storm.

22–24 Bridge Collapse (level 4): Those traveling across a bridge, a natural arch, or a section of ground covering a yet-undiscovered hollow must succeed on a Speed defense roll or plunge 40 feet (12 m), taking 4 points of damage and, on a failed Might defense roll, descending one step on the damage track. (The Speed defense rolls of those in a coach or train are hindered by two steps.)

25–27 Poisoned Waters (level 3): A lake, stream, crick, or watering hole is poisoned. Drinking from it deals 3 points of damage per round for three rounds on a failed Might defense task; merely getting wet inflicts 1 point of damage per round for three rounds on a failed Might defense task. Mounts of level 3 or less that drink the water are sickened and can't travel for a couple of days.

28–30 Saloon on Fire (level 4): Everything in the saloon (or other burning structure) takes 4 points of ambient damage each round on a failed Speed defense roll. If characters can't escape, choking smoke in the area means they must succeed on Might defense rolls each round or suffer 2 additional points of ambient damage and lose their next action.

31–33 Uncanny Gnat Swarm (level 3): A swarm of undead gnats "breathed" out by a necrovore moves up to an immediate distance each round (or remains stationary) as a cloud filling an immediate area. Those in the area take 2 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) each round from the undead bites and lose their next turn.

34–36 Waking Curse (level 4): Everyone in town wakes at midnight each night, terrified nearly to their wits' end by the same dream of a hovering, flaming skull wearing a burning cowboy hat. Everyone, that is, but for yet another person who died of fright in their sleep. Treat as a curse affecting the town that can't be removed until the grave of an outlaw buried somewhere in the town is found and the remains are cremated according to an alchemical procedure.

37–39 Demon Drinker (level 5): A demon wearing cowboy flesh sometimes appears in the region—usually in a saloon—and challenges a random patron to a drinking contest. The demon claims that if the selected target can match the demon shot for shot, the demon will return to Hell (or Perdition) without the patron's soul. Sometimes the demon is killed by lawmen or others, but it always returns—it can only truly be banished if someone beats it at its whiskey-soaked game.

Perdition, page 172

40–42 Plague of Scorpions (level 3): The shelter or campsite seems sound, until hundreds of scorpions spill from crevices, dealing 3 points of damage (ignores Armor—those little pests can get under clothing!), or 1 point even with a successful defense roll.

43–45 Lost and Hungry Settlers (level 4): A group of about eight gaunt settlers arrives in the region. They seem determined to settle in for a spell; however, they're secretly part of a cult that believes the highest sacrament is eating human flesh (preferably that of lone cowboys and such).

46–48 Stampede (level 4): A stampede of spooked pronghorns thunders through the area, streaming by for nearly a minute. Each round, other creatures in the area must succeed on a Might defense roll or be knocked down and trampled for 4 points of damage, or 1 point even with a successful defense roll.

49–51 Poisoned Ground (level 3): Whether due to an alchemical disaster, a curse, or something horrible buried underground, something about this area drinks life, dealing 1 point of ambient damage each minute a creature remains at the epicenter, and moving PCs one step down the damage track each day they remain and fail a Might defense task.

Haunted house abilities include those described in the Cypher System Bestiary *on page 58.*

Locomotem, page 84

52–54 Uncanny Sandstorm (level 4): A disruption elsewhere causes a sandstorm dotted with greenish particles to sweep across an area that seemed perfectly safe, such as a ranch or town, dealing 1 point of ambient damage every few rounds to anyone who doesn't take cover for the length of the storm (a few minutes).

55–57 Toxic Stagecoach Crash (level 4): Along the trail a stagecoach is shattered against a giant, dead tree. Tendrils of dark fluid seep out of the wreckage, creating strange patterns across the ground and up the dead tree. Contact causes psychic pain (3 points of Intellect damage) and stuns characters with a series of images too fast to identify, but which render an affected target unable to take any actions until they succeed on an Intellect defense roll.

58–60 Dark Barn (level 4): A dilapidated shack, barn, or similar outbuilding on the abandoned ranch possesses a malignancy that lures in passing travelers (with strange lights, the false cry of someone in need, etc.). Once characters are inside, the malignancy traps them with a series of supernatural exploits, ranging from something as simple as a weak floor giving way beneath a character who falls 30 feet (9 m) on a failed Speed defense roll, taking 3 points of ambient damage and moving one step down the damage track, to an elaborate ploy as might be found in a haunted house.

61–63 Guarded Train Trestle (level 4): The bridge is claimed by a raging locomotem that seems determined to divert any trains that speed across the tracks into the ravine below.

64–65 Prairie Fire (level 4): A lightning strike (or something more purposefully malevolent) sets the prairie ablaze! Characters and creatures that can't escape the burning advance (which sometimes moves an immediate distance each round, but other times leaps a short or even long distance) take 4 points of damage each round they remain in the blaze. A prairie fire is hot, but usually exhausts nearby fuel within a minute, though PCs in the area are still menaced by choking smoke; they must succeed on Might defense rolls each round or suffer an additional 2 points of ambient damage and lose their next action.

66–68 Necrotic Eclipse (level 5): Even for those whose business it is to track such things, the eclipse of the sun by the Tomb Moon comes as a surprise. During the four-minute period of complete darkness when only the sun's fiery crown is visible, a scourge of necrovores attacks the town unlucky enough to lie in the path of totality.

69–72 Ghostnado (level 5): Ghosts generate a vortex of necrotic energy, creating a rotating column of undeath that draws in nearby life, resulting in a powerful whirlwind of extinction. The vortex persists for about a minute, during which it may move an immediate distance in a random direction, jump a short or long distance, or stay still during a round. On a failed Might defense roll, any living thing touched by the ghostnado suffers 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) from their life being sucked away. PCs must also succeed on a Speed defense roll or be pulled up into the ghostnado, where they automatically suffer damage each round until either they escape or the vortex dissipates.

73–76 When It Rains, It Floods (level 4): Torrential rains in the mountains cause a serious flood in the area. Failed Speed defense rolls mean the rushing waters envelop characters in low-lying areas, inflicting 4 points of Speed damage (a combination of the tumult and the character desperately trying to keep their head above water) and moving them a short distance in the direction of the water's flow. This happens each round until an affected character can pull themself out of the water. If that wasn't bad enough, sometimes there are zombies in the water.

77–79 Alchemical Accident (level 5): An alchemist set up an out-of-the-way lab to run dangerous experiments. Those who investigate the lonely structure set off an experiment gone wrong, which implodes in a violent, violet blast dealing 5 points of damage to everything in short range.

80–82 Conscription (level 4): A broken cavalry of twelve soldiers and their captain claim they represent the government (possibly one the PCs have heard of, possibly not). The captain explains the characters have been conscripted into the army, and now must follow the soldiers to the war front. PCs who resist are attacked as deserters.

83–86 Unquiet Crops (level 3): Something's gotten into the corn. The kernels burst from their husks like bullets. Creatures within short range are attacked two or three times each round as kernels whistle past their eyes or strike home, dealing 3 points of damage per strike.

87–89 Mine Collapse (level 4): Who knew the whole area was riddled with mineshafts? The ground slumps, sending all creatures in the area who fail a Might defense roll to hold on to something solid into a subterranean region. Affected creatures take 4 points of damage in the fall, and then are potentially trapped underground in a warren of tunnels until they can find a way out. Which ain't great, but sometimes there are nightcrawlers in the tunnels.

90–93 Alien Base (level 6): A lone alien known as an enthraller has a secret base in the badlands; the alien is using mind-controlled outlaws to kidnap targets for it to study.

94–97 Hellmound (level 6): Like a human-sized anthill, except the mound is filled with demons.

98–99 Uncanny Blizzard (level 4): Blinding snow and supernaturally freezing conditions burst across the region. Those caught without cover take 4 points of ambient damage from the initial blast of cold and are thereafter subject to dangers associated with it being too cold.

00 Alchemical War Machine (level 9): A massive machine the size of a small town on great steel legs stirs in the desert.

Soldier: *level 2, attacks and damage while on horseback as level 3*

Captain: *level 4; health 25*

Tomb Moon, page 178

Necrovores, page 89

Nightcrawler, page 79

Enthraller, page 328

Too Cold, page 52

Zombie, page 371

Zombie, Cypher System Bestiary*, page 170*

CHAPTER 6

CREATURES AND NPCs OF THE WEIRD WEST

The creatures and NPCs in this chapter can help you populate your own weird west setting.

Each creature and NPC has a level, its most important stat. The level determines three things, unless an exception is noted. (Many creatures and NPCs have such exceptions, as recorded in each entry.)

The level determines the target number a PC must reach to attack or defend against the opponent; **the base target number is three times the level**.

The creature's health is three times its level (the same as the target number).

The damage a creature inflicts in combat is equal to its level.

For more detailed information on level, health, combat, and other elements making up creature stats, see Understanding the Listings in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

Understanding the Listings, page 312

For ease of reference, the target number for each creature or NPC is listed in parentheses after its level in each entry.

CYPHER SYSTEM BESTIARY CREATURES

Several weird west creatures were introduced in the *Cypher System Bestiary*. Look for a section under an appropriate category (such as forgeborn and cursed beasts) with a brief description, abridged stats with enough information to run the creature on the fly, and a pointer to where in the bestiary additional details may be found.

CREATURES AND NPCs BY LEVEL

LEVEL 2

Jackalope*

LEVEL 3

Chupacabra*
Deathtumbler*
Frostwalker

LEVEL 4

Bounty hunter*
Dire coyote
Fleshmare*
Gunslinger*
Hollowed ranger
Inkubus
Nightcrawler*
Risen
Zombie sorcerer*

LEVEL 5

Alchehemoth*
Alchemist
Angalith
Deadshot*
Hellfire steed
Hexgunner
Lawman*
Shade of the tomb
Sulfur stalker
Tombdrift
Wraith lord*

LEVEL 6

Ghost rider*
Grizzly bull*
Locomotem*
Quetzalsaur*

LEVEL 7

Deathbinder

**Abridged stats for this creature or NPC are included in* High Noon at Midnight*; additional details for the creature can be found in the* Cypher System Bestiary.

OTHER ANIMALS AND NPCs

Below is a selection of creatures and humanoid NPCs that are less uncanny than the expanded entries on later pages. Some of these humanoid NPCs could be celebrities.

ANIMALS

Bat: level 1
Bear, black: level 3, attacks as level 4
Bear, grizzly: level 5; health 20; Armor 1
Bison: level 2; health 15
Cat: level 1, Speed defense as level 3 due to size and quickness
Coyote: level 3, stealth as level 4
Dog: level 2, perception as level 3
Hawk: level 2; flies a long distance each round
Horse: level 3; moves a long distance each round
Jackrabbit: level 1; moves a long distance each round
Mountain lion: level 4; climbing, jumping, stealth, and attacks as level 5; Armor 1
Mustang: level 3; health 12; moves a long distance each round
Pronghorn cattle: level 3; health 15; horns deal 4 points of damage
Rat: level 1
Rattlesnake: level 2; venomous bite attack eased, deals 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) for three rounds
Vulture: level 1, Speed defense as level 3 due to size and quickness, perception as level 5; flies a long distance each round
Wolf: level 3, perception as level 4

NPCs

People from Native Nations are also doctors, hunters, trappers, celebrities, and so on within their own communities, as well as being part of the larger example setting The Ghost Range. Their individual fashion, gear, and weapons reflect their own cultural norms, adopt cowboy garb, or most often, represent a fusion.

Card shark: level 2, gambling with card games as level 5, pistol attacks as level 3
Doctor: level 2, healing tasks as level 3
Hunter/Fisher/Trapper: level 2, stealth and wilderness survival tasks as level 4
Preacher: level 2, persuasion as level 3
Prospector: level 2, perception as level 4; pickaxe deals 3 points of damage
Rancher: level 2, animal husbandry as level 4
Settler: level 2, homesteading as level 3
Soldier: level 2, initiative as level 4; rifle deals 4 points of damage

CELEBRITIES

A celebrity NPC is someone whose fame gives them an outsize ability to command the attention of regular folks. Their reputation probably accrued thanks to stories of actual (or made-up) daring deeds, their particular personality, or some combination of both.

For instance, some celebrities are gunfighters who earned their reputation through gunplay, which means some number of weird west celebrities are antiheroes, though marshals and lawmen balance that trope.

Another sort of weird west celebrity are folks about whom stories are told, or who tell those stories themselves, which makes them entertainers and performers of a sort. Whether holding forth in a saloon or showcasing their roping, pistol, bow, or other impressive skill, these celebrities are recognized locally and enjoy a few related benefits.

Effect: Apply the following stat adjustments to a celebrity.

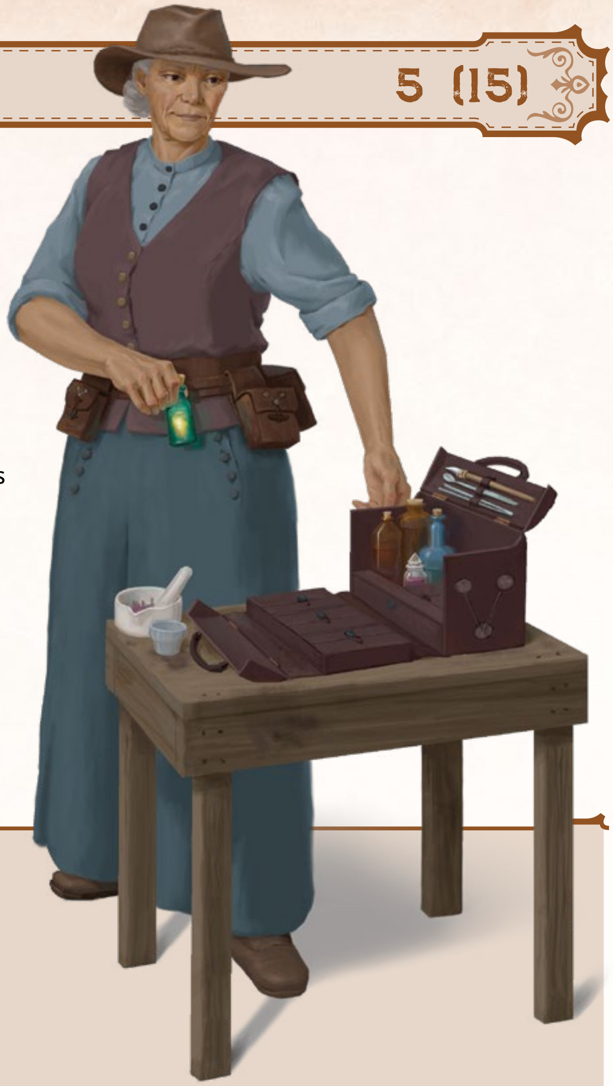
- The NPC's positive interaction tasks (or intimidation tasks, if an antihero) are eased by two steps
- The NPC can "captivate with starshine": for as long as they speak, they keep the attention of all level 2 or lower NPCs who can hear them.

Celebrity Names: For a weird west setting, celebrities may be actual historical celebrities, or have names that merely evoke them, like the following.

Belle Younger, Rainmaker, Calamity Anne, Massad Masterson, Evangeline Oakley, Doc Festival, Midday Thunder, Blackjack Cassidy, Wong Starr, Polly McGraw, Grizzlyhawk, Diamond Larue, Kieu the Kid

The Ghost Range, *page 144*

ALCHEMIST 5 (15)



Alchemists ain't afraid to use logic and laborious experiments to claw magic from the dirt. Their knowledge of alchemical lore allows them to imbue inert objects with arcane volatility. They employ tinctures that heal or control, fling powders that explode or transform, and most impressively, animate rude substances into pseudo-living entities known as forgeborn.

Many alchemists pursue their craft merely from a desire to push back the boundaries of ignorance. Others have a specific goal in mind, such as to gain riches or power, to bring back a loved one, or merely to make a friend.

GM intrusion: *The alchemist's round has a chemical load that expands and hardens when exposed to air, trapping the target in the resulting crust until they can escape.*

Forgeborn, page 84

Alchemical rounds, page 129

Forgeborn assistant: *level 3; health 15; Armor 1*

Especially accomplished alchemists may have a far more powerful forgeborn assistant, such as a deadshot or angalith.

Deadshot, page 87

Angalith, page 85

Motive: Use alchemy to achieve their ends

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to their forgeborn companion; alchemical knowledge as level 7

Combat: Alchemists use long-range pistols or rifles. At least one of their bullets may be alchemical (see GM intrusion as an example).

A forgeborn assistant also accompanies most alchemists, often helping with defense.

A given alchemist also has one or two of the following alchemical resources available in combat.

Empower: The alchemist uses a tincture to regain 11 points of health and gain +3 to Armor for one minute (or gives this tincture to an ally).

Petrify: The alchemist flings a powder that turns up to two targets in immediate range to stone on a failed Might defense roll. Targets remain stone for one minute, then regain their flesh.

Flummox: The alchemist flings a powder causing two targets in immediate range to randomly attack their allies on a failed Intellect defense roll. Affected targets remain flummoxed for one minute or until they succeed on an Intellect defense roll on their turn.

Blast: The alchemist flings a flask a short range that detonates in an acidic blast on impact, dealing damage to all creatures in an immediate area on a failed Speed defense roll, or 1 point of damage on a successful roll.

Non-Combat Alchemy: A given alchemist could create tinctures able to revive the recently dead, animate dead flesh, transform lead into gold, and so on, if given many hours or days.

Interaction: Few alchemists can resist talking about their research and the wonders of magic that "natural philosophy" can unlock, regardless of their larger goals.

Use: The PCs need to revive an unresponsive forgeborn to learn what it knows, which means they need to find an alchemist.

Loot: An alchemist may have a couple of useful items (roll twice on the Alchemical Rounds and Slugs table), assuming they didn't use them in combat.

Alchemical rounds and slugs, page 129

CURSED BEASTS

Cursed beasts are often hybrid animals, a fusion of two or more different beasts stitched together with dire sorcery, or a combination of beast and base material (such as snow and dead flesh). Other times they're ancient creatures time would've been better off forgetting.

Mysterious things, cursed beasts are often capable of coming and going as they please. In some times and places, they are called "cryptids" because at their core, they seem unknowable. Cursed beasts include dire coyotes, frostwalkers, hellfire steeds, and sulfur stalkers.

Dire coyote, page 80

Frostwalker, page 81

Hellfire steed, page 82

Sulfur stalker, page 83

CURSED BEASTS FROM THE *CYPHER SYSTEM BESTIARY*

In a more enlightened age, cursed beasts might exist in entirely different taxonomies. But times are what they are, and the following are generally considered to be members of the cursed beasts category: chupacabras, quetzalsaurs, grizzly bulls, deathtumblers, jackalopes, and nightcrawlers.

Chupacabra: Part huge dog, part crocodile; quilled like a porcupine.

Level 3, Speed defense as level 4 due to quickness, stealth and perception as level 7; health 13; Armor 2; bites for 5 points of damage; long-range quill attack puts target to sleep for one hour on a failed difficulty 5 Might defense roll (target can try to wake each round)

Additional chupacabra details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 178*

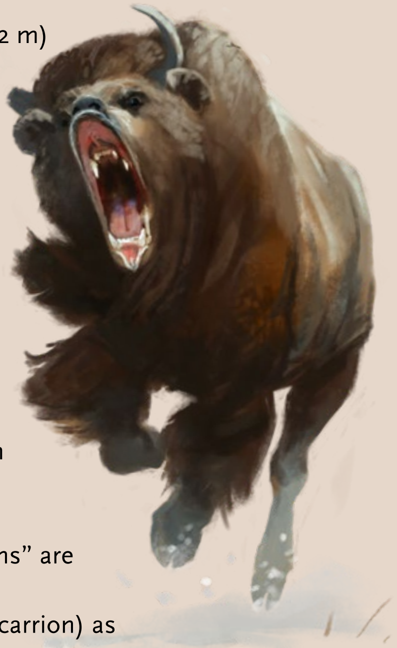
Quetzalsaur: Giraffe-sized monstrosity with a 40-foot (12 m) wingspan.

Level 6, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; health 33; Armor 2; flies a long distance each round; beak attack for 7 points of damage; vomits up two zombie helpers (corpses of past victims) once per conflict

Additional quetzalsaur details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 179*

Additional zombie details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 170*

Zombie, page 371



Grizzly Bull: Bison bull magically crossed with a grizzly bear.

Level 6, Speed defense as level 5 due to size, breaking through walls as level 8; health 28; Armor 1; horns attack deal 6 points of damage; if a foe within immediate range misses the bull, the grizzly bull gets an immediate extra attack

Additional grizzly bull details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 180*

Deathtumbler: Human-sized tumbleweeds whose "thorns" are actually animal fangs.

Level 3, Speed defense as level 4, disguise (as rotting carrion) as level 6; slashes with toothed branches for 3 points of damage; mundane attacks against deathtumbler deal only 1 point of damage each; attacks all targets in immediate area if it has surprise, dealing damage and, on a failed Might defense roll, 3 additional points of Speed damage (ignores Armor)

Additional deathtumbler details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 180*

Jackalope: Jackrabbit with the horns of an antelope.

Level 2, Speed defense as level 4, stealth and illusions as level 5; moves a long distance each round, immediate when burrowing; gores with antlers for 3 points of damage; creates illusion that can fill a short area and lasts for ten minutes or until interacted with

Additional jackalope details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 181*

Nightcrawler: 20-foot (6 m) long earthworm with skin stripped from past prey.

Level 4, Speed defense as level 3; bite deals 5 points of damage

Additional nightcrawler details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 181*

DIRE COYOTE 4 (12)

GM intrusion: *The dire coyote takes on the likeness of a ghost of someone the character knew—the ghost is someone the dire coyote has recently destroyed.*

Remnants of ancient populations reinvigorated by cursed magic, dire coyotes hunt lost and isolated creatures, regardless of whether the prey is alive or already dead. Dire coyotes are gaunt and sinewy, almost as large as a horse. Their hides are branded with arcane sigils that still glow and smoke with the sorcery that pulses through them.

Dire coyotes usually hunt in teams of two or three. However, their howls give the impression of a far larger number of individuals in the night.

Motive: Hungers for flesh, defense

Environment: Almost anywhere dark and isolated or near places ghosts haunt, individually and in teams of two or three

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 6; attacks and defense against ghosts, wraiths, and other spirits as level 6

Combat: A dire coyote bites each round.

A dire coyote also has one or more of the following traits.

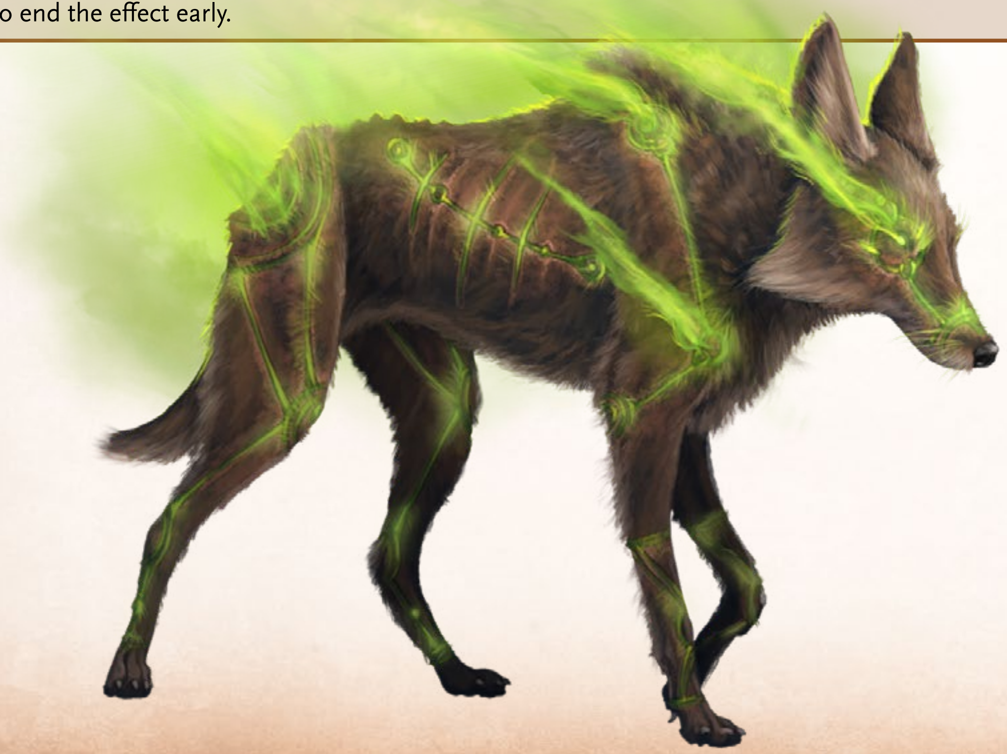
Forlorn Howl: The dire coyote unleashes a forlorn howl that magically resonates within an adjacent short area (no more than once every few minutes). Creatures in the area take 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor), causing them to run terrified in a random direction determined by the GM for several minutes, unless they succeed on an Intellect defense roll to end the effect early.

Ghost eater: A dire coyote's attacks affect incorporeal ghosts, wraiths, and similar spirits. If a dire coyote destroys a ghost or wraith, that usually ends the haunting, even if the spirit normally returns. Destroying a ghost heals a dire coyote to full health, but afterward the dire coyote must sleep for a few hours to "digest" the essence.

Ignite Gun: If a dire coyote is damaged by a gun attack (or bow, or similar mechanism), the gun wielder must immediately succeed on an Intellect defense roll or their gun ignites, burning anyone holding it for 4 points of damage each round for three rounds.

Interaction: Dire coyotes have a secret language and society, but usually present to outsiders as just particularly dangerous coyotes. However, if they wish, dire coyotes can speak with the voice and memories of any ghost they have personally destroyed.

Use: A sheriff who posted a bounty on dire coyotes has gone missing, and their spouse needs someone to go find them.



FROSTWALKER 3 (9)

A frostwalker is a cursed beast made of packed snow layered over the severed limbs, heads, gristle, antlers, and sinew from deer, wolves, and sometimes people who've died in the cold. As such, they vary in appearance. Some are about the size of wolves, others are human-sized with antlers, and a few—especially those with more limbs and/or heads than normal—can be up to twice the size of a person.

Frostwalkers may be creations of dire sorcery, though some gain motive force from the spirits of blizzards, ice, and enmity earned through past atrocity.

Frostwalkers could be classified as necrovores instead of (or in addition to) cursed beasts, or possibly even as a forgeborn variety. Creature classification isn't as neat and tidy as some alchemists might wish.

GM intrusion: *An important piece of the character's equipment freezes solid, rendering it unusable until it's thawed.*

Motive: Revenge

Environment: Almost anywhere cold enough for snow and ice

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 5

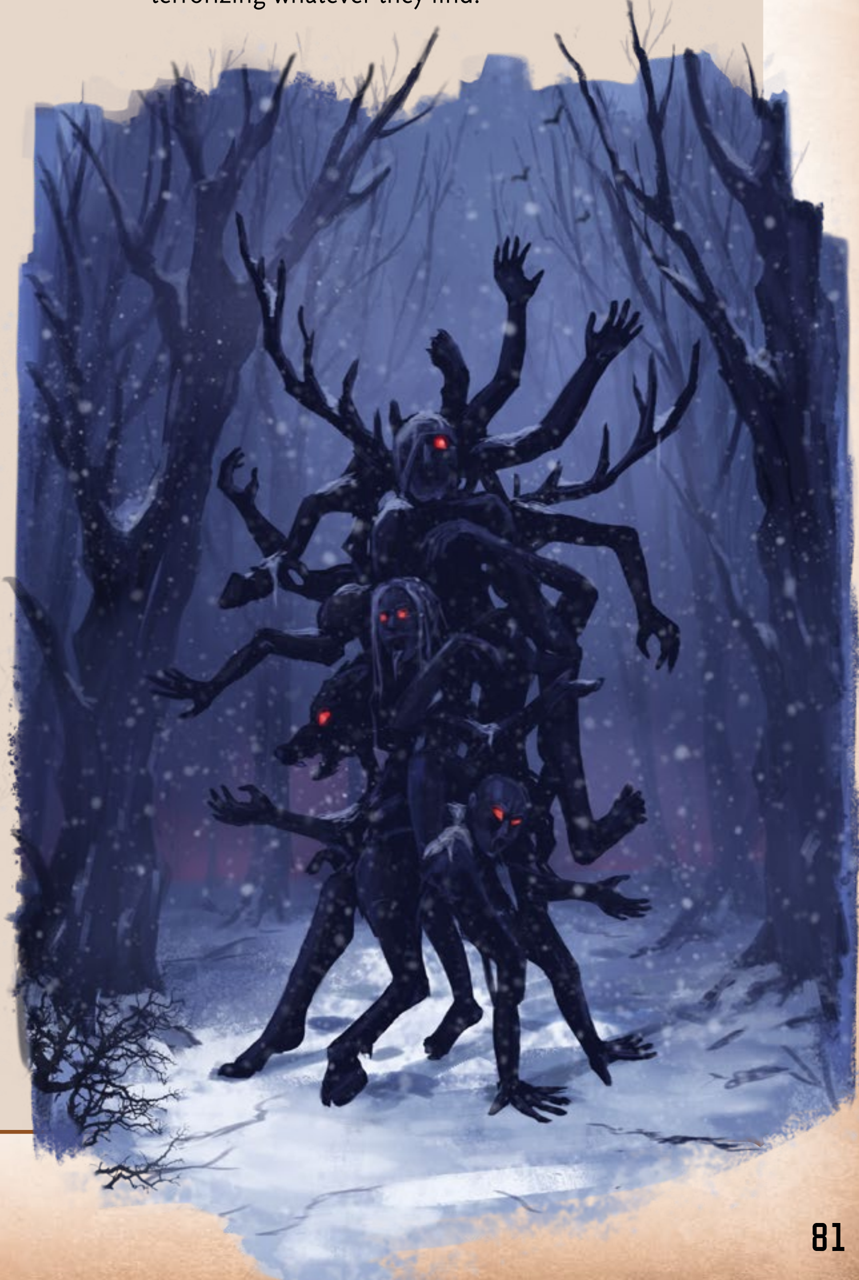
Combat: Frostwalkers bite, gore, or claw with whatever body part they have available.

Frostwalkers may also have one or more of the following abilities.

- *Frozen:* The frostwalker regains 1 point of health for each point of damage they would otherwise take from cold. In freezing temperatures and lower, they regain 1 point of health each round (assuming they're not destroyed).
- *Scream the Blizzard:* The frostwalker can expel screaming cold winds (no more than once every few minutes), filling an adjacent short area. Creatures in the area take 4 points of ambient damage from the cold and, on a failed Might defense roll, are frozen in place for one minute or until they succeed on a Might-based roll as their action. Even a successful Might defense roll dazes the target with cold, hindering their tasks for one minute.
- *Small and Quick:* About the size of a wolf, this frostwalker only has 1 Armor but can move a long distance each round.
- *Snow Monster:* Twice the size of a person, this frostwalker might have two or more heads (one wolf, one deer) and extra arms. It attacks twice per round, moves an immediate distance each round, and has 24 health.

Interaction: Frostwalkers are usually made (or form spontaneously) to enact vengeance or to attack a foe, and will do so until they're destroyed.

Use: When the lake freezes over, monstrous things made of snow slide across the solid surface and begin terrorizing whatever they find.



HELLFIRE STEED 5 (15)

Damned, page 99

GM intrusion: *The steed decides it no longer wants the character as a rider and takes back their immunity to fire.*

Intermittently ridden straight out of Hell by demons wearing borrowed flesh, the Damned, and others seeking to escape the accursed underworld, hellfire steeds are demonic, fire-dripping destriers. Their manes are boiling napalm, their glowing red hooves leave prints that burn and smolder for days, and a single demonic horn curls from their brows.

Once free of Hell, these steeds typically buck their riders and race off across the prairielands, setting blazes as they go, apparently seeking to wreak as much havoc as they can before they're reclaimed by Hell.

Motive: Havoc and suffering

Environment: Almost anywhere; sometimes ridden as a mount by the powerful or foolish

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1 (10 against fire)

Combat: Hellfire steeds attack twice each round with their horn.

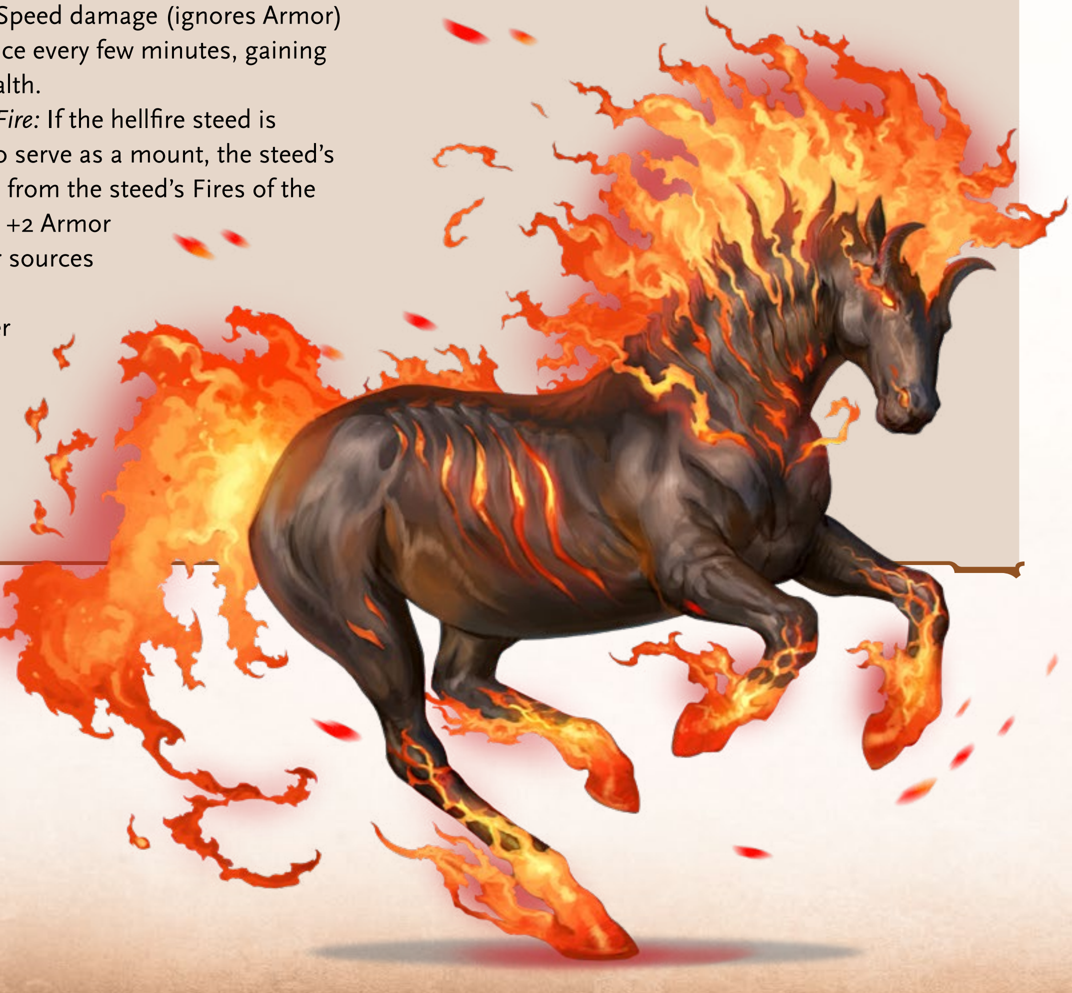
Hellfire steeds also have one or more of the following traits.

- *Fires of the Underworld:* Anyone not chosen as a rider by the hellfire steed that ends a turn within immediate range of the creature takes 2 points of damage from hellish heat.
- *Lifedraining Horn:* The hellfire steed deals an additional 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) with its horn attack once every few minutes, gaining that drained life as health.
- *Render Immune to Fire:* If the hellfire steed is compelled or agrees to serve as a mount, the steed's rider takes no damage from the steed's Fires of the Underworld and gains +2 Armor against fire from other sources while riding.
- *From Hell:* Once per year, a hellfire steed can emerge from or enter Hell through a transitory portal, bearing riders if it chooses.
- *Death Gallop:* If killed, a hellfire steed's body animates one last time, galloping a long distance before turning to ash. Everyone along its final route takes 5 points of fire damage on a failed Speed defense roll.

Interaction: Though usually driven by demonic desire, hellfire steeds are fully sapient and can speak all languages. They may negotiate with someone seeking to use them as a mount, but only in return for a promise of committing atrocities.

Use: Stuck in Hell or a similarly hellish place, characters may have to ask a hellfire steed for a ride out.

Loot: A hellfire steed's horn is a sought-after alchemist ingredient; a full horn is a very expensive item.



SULFUR STALKER 5 (15)

Dwelling in steaming, acidic hot springs, sulfur stalkers' umbral, scaled bodies can reach lengths of 10 or more feet (3 m). Their broad, flat heads feature wide, gaping mouths filled with rows of sharp teeth. Feathery tendrils fringe their heads, twining and stretching as if of their own accord. Powerful clawed limbs and an eel-like tail mean they're equally adept on land and in liquid—even boiling hot, acrid springs. The overpowering smell of sulfur—like rotten eggs—precedes and follows them.

Sulfur stalkers periodically emerge from their pools and migrate long distances, presumably to mate. During this migration, they grow ravenously hungry, preying on anything. They also drag away people, which they feed to their newly hatched young.

GM intrusion: *A severed segment of a sulfur stalker animates as a half-size, level 3 sulfur stalker that attacks the character. The stalker might have to bite off its tail to start this process.*

Expensive item, page 202

Motive: Defense, gather food for newly hatched young

Environment: Anywhere near hot springs, or anywhere during seasons of migration

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 2 (5 against fire; immune to acid)

Movement: Short; swims a short distance each round

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4 due to size; stealth as level 6

Combat: Sulfur stalkers bite.

Additional sulfur stalker abilities include one or more of the following.

Tendril Aura: Any creature that begins their turn within immediate range of a sulfur stalker must succeed on a Speed defense roll or be grazed by a feathery tendril for 3 points of damage from dripping acid.

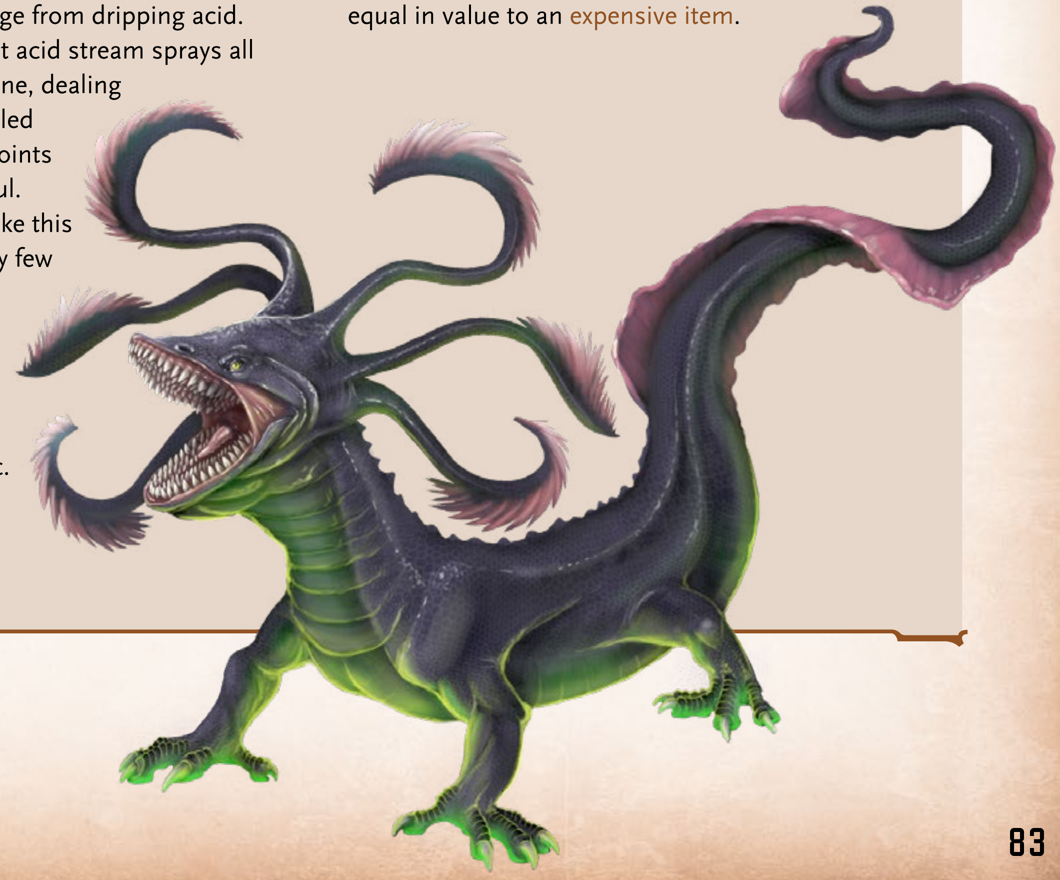
Acid Geyser: A boiling-hot acid stream sprays all creatures in a short-range line, dealing 9 points of damage on a failed Speed defense roll, and 2 points of damage even if successful. (The sulfur stalker can't make this attack more than once every few minutes.)

Regrow: If damaged, a sulfur stalker regains 2 health each round on any round it hasn't taken damage from cold or magic. This ability is so pernicious that an entirely new sulfur stalker could grow from a severed portion.

Interaction: Sulfur stalkers have a language, and some can speak human tongues, especially those that have made deals with locals. Such deals usually involve turning over some number of other people each year for the stalker to eat—culled from a local jail, taken in outlaw raids, etc.

Use: A bounty for sulfur stalker eggs is so generous that folks everywhere begin hunting. This riles up the local stalker population, who begin attacking towns and homesteads preemptively.

Loot: Because sulfur stalkers tend to capture people to feed their young, cast-off belongings can sometimes be found in their nests—which are well-hidden locations near hot springs, but not under them. In addition, a nest might contain an egg or two, each equal in value to an expensive item.



FORGEBORN

Inkubus, page 86

Forgeborn—also called golems—are animate figures of metal, reanimated flesh, or other normally inert materials. They are constructed for a specific purpose; an angalith is usually sent to punish or guard, and inkubuses are commonly seeded as spies or assassins.

Most forgeborn have the following traits:

Dim: Most forgeborn (though there are many exceptions) aren't quick thinkers; their Intellect defense against being tricked or mentally attacked is level 2.

Temperamental: A forgeborn can break free of the spells that bind them to service for brief periods. This happens automatically two rounds after the forgeborn fails an Intellect defense roll against an attack or attempt to control them. The triggered forgeborn attacks twice each round for two or three rounds, choosing targets indiscriminately but preferring anyone who attempted to control them.

Resistant: Forgeborn cannot be stunned or dazed. They are immune to most poisons and disease.

Quiet: Most forgeborn can't speak (but some can).

FORGEBORN FROM THE *CYPHER SYSTEM BESTIARY*

Gunfighters, page 87

Forgeborn may serve as bodyguards for the alchemist or ghost rider who made them, or guardians of an important location or dangerous or powerful object. They may also serve as soldiers, couriers, and banner-bearers. Whatever their role, they often have interesting additional abilities, illustrated by variants such as locomotems, fleshmares, and alchehemoths. (Deadshots are also forgeborn, but their abridged stats appear under gunfighters.)

Additional locomotem details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 185*

Locomotem: 20-foot (6 m) tall humanoid figure fabricated from a coal-fed train engine.

Level 6, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; health 30; Armor 5; steam whistle (once per hour) stuns creatures in immediate range on failed Might defense roll

Additional fleshmare details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 186*

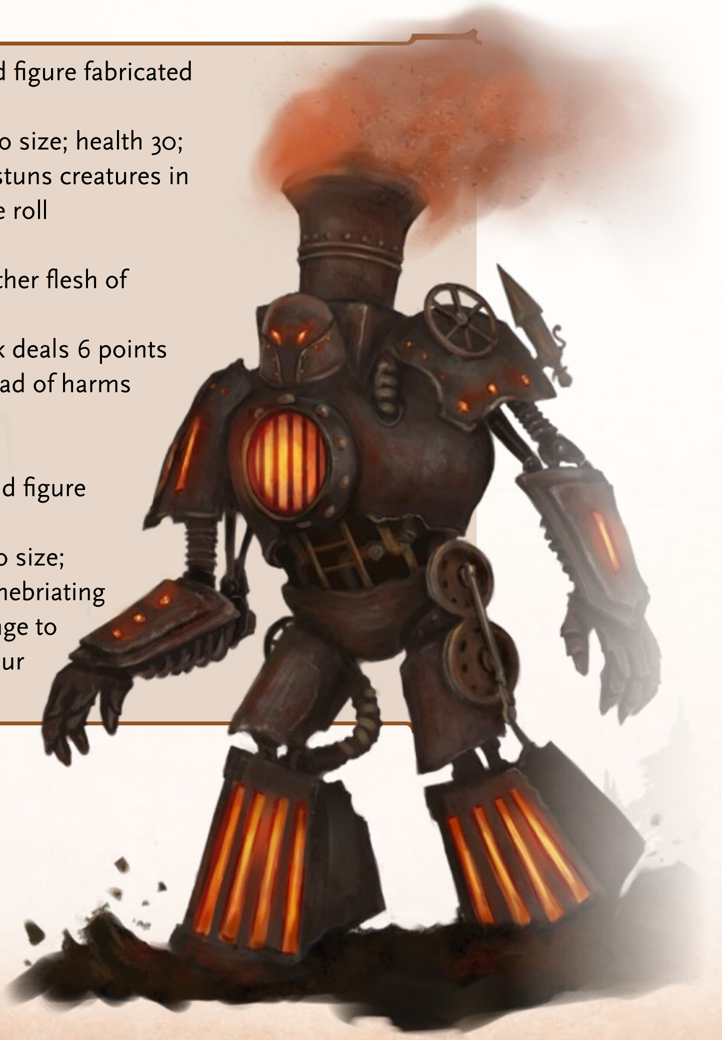
Fleshmare: Made from the stitched-together flesh of deceased horses.

Level 4; health 24; Armor 3; hoof attack deals 6 points of damage; electrical damage heals instead of harms fleshmare

Additional alchehemoth details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 186*

Alchehemoth: 10-foot (3 m) tall humanoid figure fabricated from a metallic whiskey still.

Level 5, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; health 27; fists deal 7 points of damage; inebriating breath causes creatures in immediate range to fall into booze-fueled slumber for one hour on failed Might defense roll



ANGALITH 5 (15)

An angalith—a forgeborn fabricated from prismatic stained glass windows taken from cathedrals and churches—is a 15-foot (4.5 m) tall figure.

GM intrusion: *The character sliced by the jagged edge of a stained glass wing begins bleeding for 1 ambient damage each round until someone succeeds on a difficulty 3 healing task to stop the flow.*

Motive: Follow the will of their creator (but actually, break the control of their creator or whoever has control over them; see Temperamental)

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 27

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: Intellect defense as level 2; Speed defense as level 4 due to size

Combat: Angaliths slice foes with jagged edges of their stained glass wings.

Angaliths have the following additional abilities and traits.

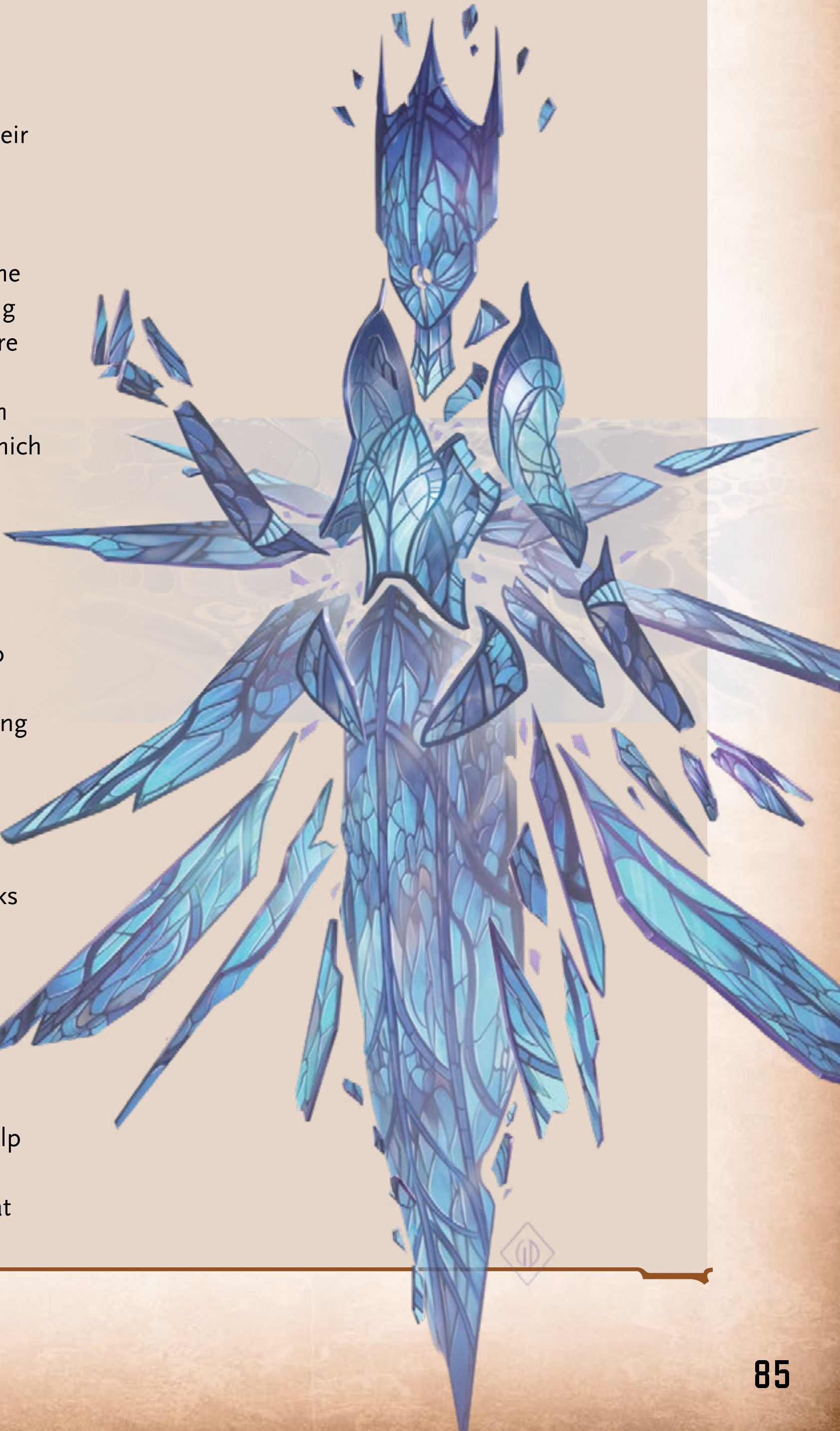
Prismatic Blaze: Six prismatic shafts of light shine from the angalith's core as their action, illuminating the sins of all creatures within short range (no more than once each minute). A given target is subject to only one shaft of light, which they must make an Intellect defense roll to resist. Choose or roll for which sin is brought to light for each target.

1. Red (Wrath): Target attacks an ally on their next turn.
2. Orange (Envy): Target throws mud/dung/etc. in the face of an ally on their next turn.
3. Yellow (Apathy): Target sits down and stares into space on their next turn.
4. Green (Greed): Target attempts to steal something from an ally on their next turn.
5. Blue (Gluttony): Target chows down nearest food—or goes looking for some—on their next turn.
6. Indigo (Pride): Target sniffs disdainfully and walks away from the combat on their next turn.

Forgeborn Traits: Angaliths are Dim, Temperamental, Resistant, and Quiet.

Interaction: Angaliths resonate with the worship and faith their component parts once witnessed. Often, that faith was preaching about the welfare of other beings, so they may stop to help those in need. But if they see someone act against the common good, in an angalith's estimation, that someone is due only hellfire.

Use: Angaliths—like most forgeborn—are tough encounters even for those who are tooled up for a fight. However, they can be assuaged with promises of saintly acts or demonstrations of good works, which could turn an angry angalith found in a demolished church into a temporary ally.



INKUBUS 4 (12)

Inkubuses are forgeborn that are also known as "ink golems."

GM intrusion: *Important documents or other papers the character carries flap away and become part of the inkubus.*

An inkubus enjoys two different states of being. One is as an alchemically marked-up page, whether that's a sheet in a book or newspaper, a letter, a broadsheet, or a wanted poster. There's little to distinguish this inkubus "seed" from regular paper without a concerted search for magical influence. Each seed has a trigger, set by the alchemist who created it. The trigger could be when the page is read, when a certain amount of time is expired, when a specified individual sees the page, or something else.

A triggered inkubus takes on substance either immediately, as nearby paper swirls in and accretes around the seed, or gradually, if the inkubus is meant to remain unobtrusive (as often happens when the seed is a wanted poster whose target just wandered by).

When fully embodied, an inkubus appears as a human-sized dragonfly-like paper sculpture covered in constantly scrolling words.

Motive: As determined when seeded (but actually, break the control of their creator or whoever has control over them; see Temperamental)

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: Stealth as level 8 (when not fully manifest)

Combat: Inkubuses slice targets with knife-sharp paper cuts as their attack.

Inkubuses may have one or more of the following additional traits, depending on their purpose.

Word of Power: An inkubus contains a "word of power" that it can display as an action once per day. A target in short range who sees it and fails an Intellect defense roll is affected as indicated for one minute (or longer for Forget):

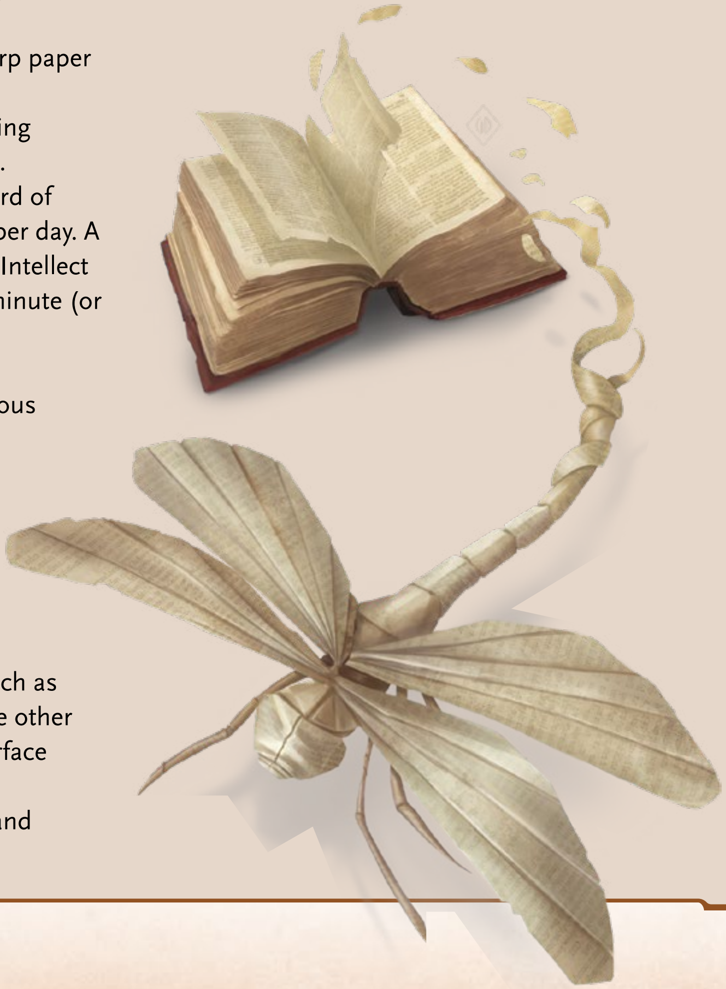
- Stunned: Target takes no action.
- Confess: Target starts with their most egregious crimes/secrets, one per turn.
- Betray: Target attacks nearby allies.
- Forget: Target goes back to whatever they were doing and doesn't remember meeting the inkubus unless or until they meet again.

Words on the Floor: The inkubus can send written words to their creator (or anyone), such as a warning, an update on their status, or some other predetermined signal. Words appear on a surface near the creator.

Forgeborn Traits: Inkubuses are Resistant and Temperamental.

Interaction: The inkubus is more self-aware than most other forgeborn, and may interact with characters by using its Words on the Floor ability.

Use: The PCs receive a letter from a famous alchemist, which becomes an inkubus that relays the alchemist's message (an invitation, a warning, a threat, or something else).



GUNFIGHTERS

Gunfighters live and die by their six-chambered peacemakers using a threatened—or actual—lightning-quick draw to accomplish their aims. Most gunfighters are regular folks who practice their craft so diligently that they become the best, at least until they measure themselves against a desperado who's a smidge faster. Most gunfighters in a weird west setting have a bit of the supernatural about them, but one variety of gunfighter, known as a hex gunner, explicitly mixes magic with bullets.

Hex gunner, page 88

GUNFIGHTERS FROM THE *CYPHER SYSTEM BESTIARY*

Different gunfighters pursue different goals, sometimes serving the law, other times doing the opposite, and usually falling somewhere in between. Gunfighters include the following: bounty hunters, deadshots (also classified as forgeborn), gunslingers, and lawmen.

Bounty hunter: Figure in sleek, form-fitting dark duster and wide-brimmed hat with twin guns.

Level 4; tracking, surveillance, stealth, and disguise as level 6; health 15; Armor 1; attacks twice with long-range pistol; a melee attack with locking cuffs (level 5) binds target to a nearby large object on a failed Speed defense roll

Additional bounty hunter details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 108*

Deadshot: Eight-foot (3 m) figure stitched together from the reanimated flesh of deceased gunslingers.

Level 5; initiative as level 8; health 27; Armor 4; long-range pistol attack deals 7 points of damage; once a minute fires necrotic bullet that deals 3 points of damage each round (ignores Armor) until bullet extracted with a difficulty 4 healing task

Additional deadshot details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 187*

Gunslinger: Grim-faced pistoleer pursuing vengeance, doing crime, or making a name for themself.

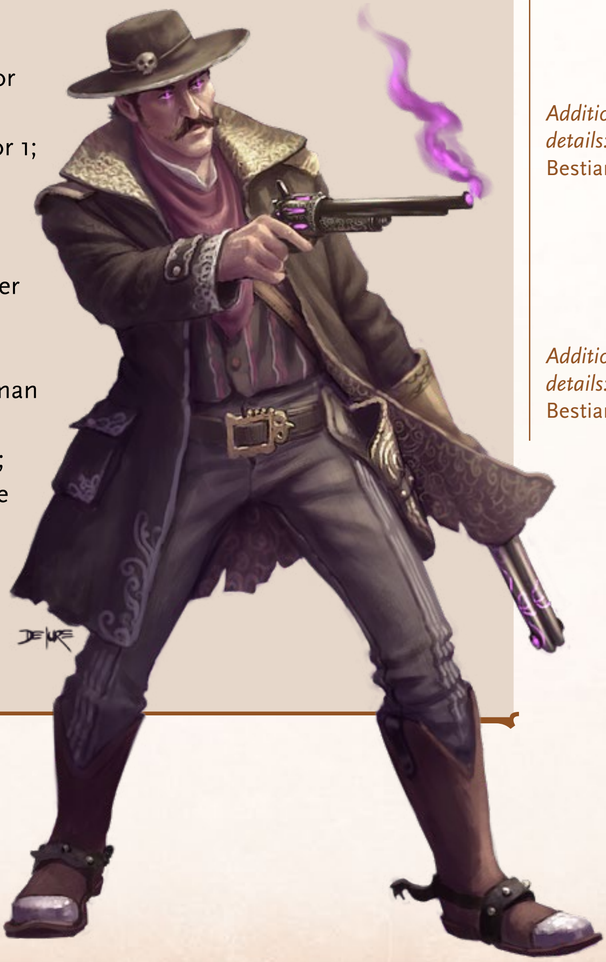
Level 4, initiative as level 7; health 18; Armor 1; long-range pistol attack deals 6 points of damage (or 8 points with eased attack if they attack before their foe); every hit increases damage by 1 point for the rest of the encounter (to a maximum of +10)

Additional gunslinger details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 182*

Lawman: Driven by a dream of justice, a lawman enforces rules even when no one else will.

Level 5, Might defense as level 6; health 20; Armor 1; long-range rifle attacks; the first time a lawman would normally succumb to their wounds (having lost all their health), they instead gain a second wind (and 10 health); banishing rounds deal full damage to ghosts and similarly protected creatures

Additional lawman details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 188*



GM intrusion: *The hex gunner releases a demon from their gun that immediately attacks the character.*

Demon, page 322

Additional demon details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 54*

Ghost rider, page 89

Zombie, page 371

Additional zombie details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 170*

HEX GUNNER 5 (15)

Hex gunners weave iron and lead with Hellish sorcery. Gifts from a demon gained during a crossroads deal, a hex gunner's six-shooters are demonic constructs that grant the equivalent of years of practice and occult study. Their bullets whisper in the chamber, smoking with necromancy, then scream with exultant, hellish fury when fired. Each round is imbued with fragments of souls from those the hex gunner has previously defeated in gunfights.

Hex gunners may be pledged to a literal lord of Hell (or some other occult being of damnation and pain, such as a ghost rider). Only if they harvest a certain number of souls during their gunfighting career is their own soul safe from being claimed when their life ends. That value may be visible as a glowing number burning in their eyes.

Motive: Reap souls for Hell

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 23

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

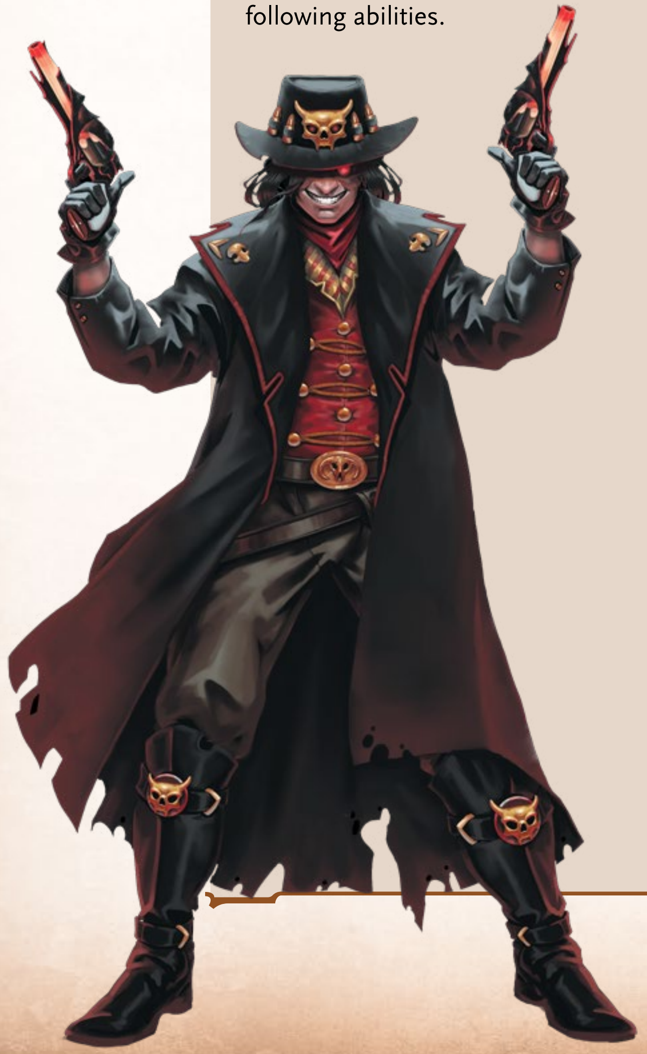
Armor: 2

Movement: Short; long while riding a horse

Modifications: Initiative as level 7

Combat: A hex gunner makes two long-range pistol attacks as their action.

A hex gunner also has one or both of the following abilities.



Hell-Hexed Rounds: A bullet that deals damage stays in the wound on a hit, cursing the target until the bullet is surgically removed (each requiring a successful difficulty 6 healing task and inflicting 1 point of ambient damage). Curses vary, including:

- Soul of damned previous target possesses the new target once per day for one minute on a failed Intellect defense roll. Possessing spirit may work against target, or simply take off seeking some goal of their own.
- Wound leaks a horrific smell and discharge; target's pleasant interaction tasks are hindered by two steps.
- Target's GM intrusion range increases by 1 until bullet is removed.

Grave Round: If they shoot a corpse, the corpse rises as a zombie that serves the hex gunner for a day. During this period, the zombie can reveal secrets it knew in life to the hex gunner.

Interaction: Hex gunners are mainly concerned with reaping more souls for whoever they are pledged to. Usually, they prefer those souls be already tainted by evil, but hex gunners are angry and impatient as a rule and have nearly as little sympathy for the innocent as they do for the damned.

Use: PCs need information from someone who died. They learn that a "hex gunner" who dwells nearby may be able to communicate with the body.

NECROVORE

Necrovores—otherwise known as undead—are what some call those that feed on death, those that *are* dead but still move, those that feed on life, and all things that lie somewhere in between. Now, some might quibble about using "necrovore" for such a wide range of creatures. But does it make a lick of difference if you call a shade of the tomb—a wraith that takes form from a gravestone's shadow—a necrovore, a demon, or an undead when it's draining all joy from existence? Nope. Same holds true for a deathbinder, hollowed ranger, risen (also called Damned), and tombdrift.

Shade of the Tomb, page 94

NECROVORES FROM THE *CYPHER SYSTEM BESTIARY*

Some are bodiless, some are shambling corpses, and some defy easy descriptions. But all of them are tainted with necromancy. Necrovores include the following: ghost riders, wraith lords, and zombie sorcerers.

Ghost Rider: Harbingers of chaos and catastrophe, ghost riders spread havoc long past their deaths.

Level 6; health 20; Armor 1; rides a skeletal mount a long distance each round; long-range pistol attack deals 6 damage; short-range curse causes target who fails an Intellect defense roll to lose their next turn as they freeze in terror

Additional ghost rider details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 194*

Wraith Lord: A malign artifact or especially powerful curse may form an exceptional wraith.

Level 5, stealth as level 6; health 22; Armor 1; flies a short distance each round (or is mounted on a quetzalsaur); spectral weapon deals 6 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) and induces target to fall one step on the damage track each day a Might defense roll fails (three successes purge the effect); if destroyed, a wraith usually reforms the following midnight

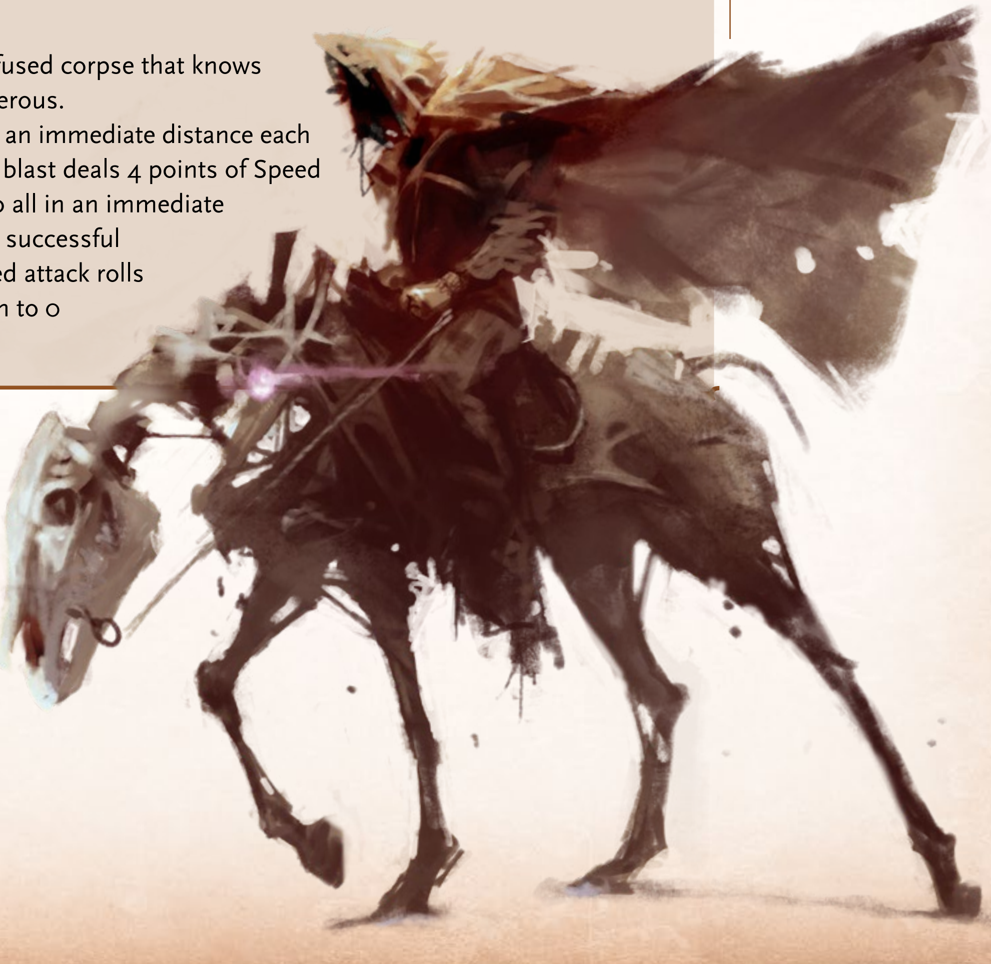
Additional wraith lord details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 33*

Quetzalsaur, page 79

Zombie sorcerer: Magic-infused corpse that knows enough sorcery to be dangerous.

Level 4; health 18; moves an immediate distance each round; long-range necrotic blast deals 4 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) to all in an immediate area, or 1 point even with a successful defense roll; even-numbered attack rolls that would reduce its health to 0 reduce health to 1 instead

Additional zombie sorcerer details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 173*



GM intrusion: *The deathbinder makes an extra pistol attack even if it's not their turn.*

DEATHBINDER 7 (21)

Risen, page 92

Alchemists who learn enough science and magic to retain corporeal existence after death, like risen, might transition to necrovore status. Unlike a risen, a deathbinder ensures their eternal existence by placing splinters of their soul into six bullets chambered in a "soul pistol." If all six bullets are fired, the deathbinder is finally destroyed.

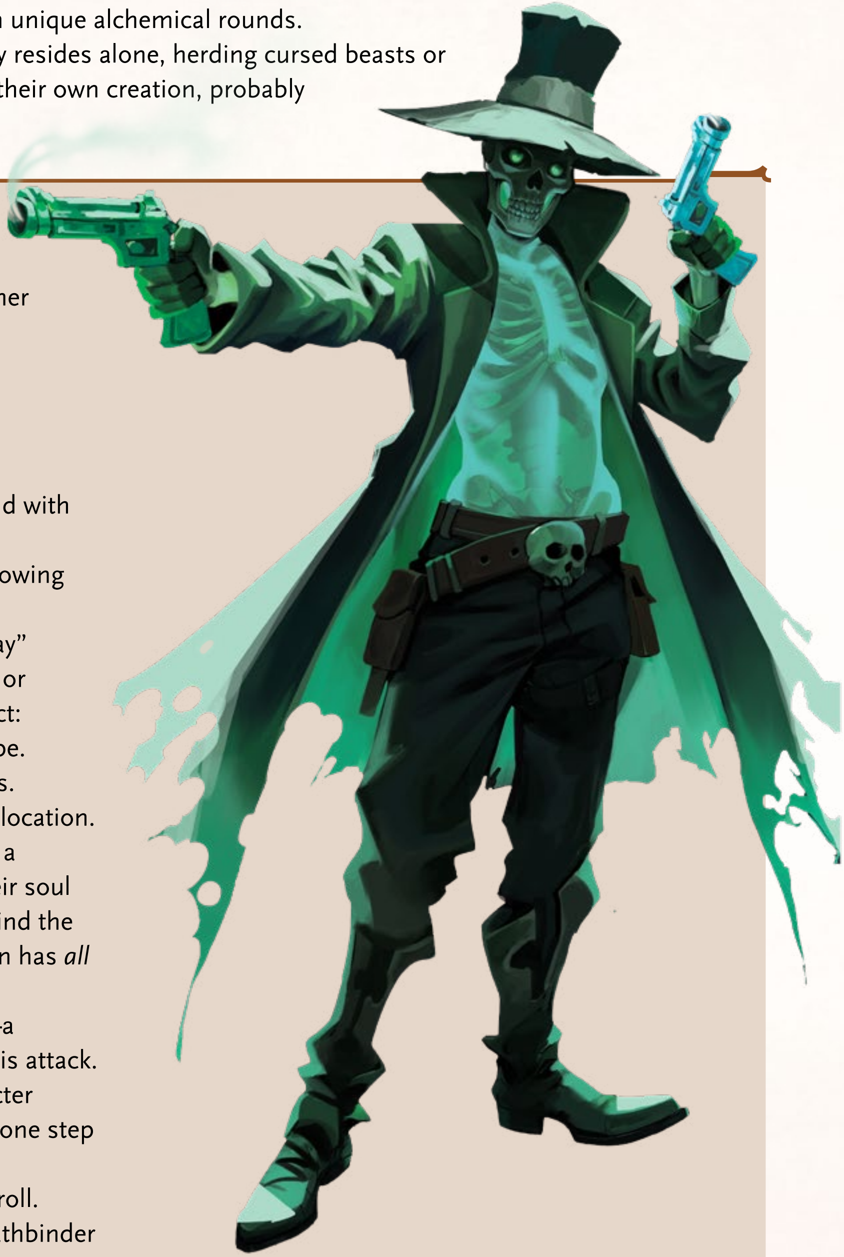
Fleshmare, page 84

Curses of the Weird West, page 60

Alchemical rounds and slugs, page 129

Two pistols are holstered on a deathbinder's gun belt: the deathbinder's soul pistol, which they reserve for special circumstances, and their "workaday" six-shooter, loaded with unique alchemical rounds.

A deathbinder usually resides alone, herding cursed beasts or forgeborn creatures of their own creation, probably astride a fleshmare.



Motive: Continue alchemical studies and magical collection without interruption

Environment: Wilderness, ghost towns, and other underpopulated areas

Health: 27

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Combat: A deathbinder attacks twice each round with long-range pistol attacks.

The deathbinder also has most or all of the following attacks and traits.

Alchemical Pistol: Targets hit by a "workaday" pistol shot take damage and, on a failed Might or Intellect defense roll, suffer one additional effect:

- Target is frozen in amber until they can escape.
- Deathbinder learns one of the target's secrets.
- Target is teleported to a pre-prepared nearby location.

Soul Pistol: Under extreme circumstances, a deathbinder may fire a precious bullet from their soul pistol, hoping they'll have a chance later to rebind the liberated soul energy. A bullet from the soul gun has *all* of the following deadly traits:

- Automatically hits target within long range—a targeted PC should get a GM intrusion for this attack.
- The soul round deals damage and the character descends two steps on the damage track, or one step on a successful Might defense roll.
- Target is cursed on a failed Intellect defense roll.

Alchemical Resurrection: If destroyed, a deathbinder usually reforms within 1d6 days unless all six bullets from their soul pistol are fired.

Interaction: Deathbinders don't cotton to interruptions because the reason they chose undeath in the first place was to pursue a specialized purpose—usually, even deeper secrets of alchemy and/or collecting more unique magical artifacts and treasures.

Use: A herd of ghost cattle wanders into town and causes problems. Folks say it's the fault of the "lich cowboy" who lives out in the wastes.

Loot: The deathbinder's pistols have uniquely powerful rounds loaded in them; roll once on the Alchemical Rounds and Slugs table.

HOLLOWED RANGER 4 (12)

Cloaked in a tattered duster and riding nothing but a memory, the necrovore known as a hollowed ranger is a traveling portal to elsewhere—perhaps connecting to a nightmare, the far future after everyone has died, or some region of Hell where corpses shamble beneath an eternal eclipse.

Hollowed rangers ride forth where good people were gunned down in cold blood and then dumped in shallow, unmarked graves. The injustice rips a hole in the world, which the murdered spirit possesses and becomes. Unfortunately, a hollowed ranger's desire for vengeance doesn't restrict them from visiting horror on most everything they encounter.

Motive: Vengeance (first against their killer, then their killer's family and friends, then their killer's species, and so on)
Environment: Almost anywhere
Health: 18
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to partially non-existent body
Combat: A hollowed ranger's long-range entropic bullet—fired from a rifle-shaped hole in reality—deals 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) as a bit of the target's reality is blasted away.

A hollowed ranger also has the following traits.

Necrovore Door: As their action, the ranger shudders as a wraith lord emerges from their body, acting as the ranger wishes for one minute. After one minute, the wraith is drawn back into the ranger, or it just fades. (Other necrovores could instead be called from the deathly realms a hollowed ranger is connected to, but anything level 3 or higher takes two actions to disgorge.)

Fall Into Oblivion: On a failed Might defense roll, a living creature starting their turn in immediate range of a hollowed ranger is sucked through the hollowed ranger's form into the deathly realm beyond. This realm is anathema to life—the affected target immediately takes 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) from the necrotic energy draining their soul. Affected targets are drained of life each additional round they spend in the deathly realm, but can attempt a Might-based task to pull themselves back to their reality. The hollowed ranger regains 1 point of health each time an affected target's soul is so drained.

Door Shift: A hollowed ranger can instantly transport themself miles away as its action, if they have previously been to or seen the other location.

Interaction: Speaking with a voice like wind on gravestones, a hollowed ranger may tell of the primary target of their vengeance, deliver a message from a more powerful necrovore, or simply promise to eat the soul of whoever tries negotiating with them.
Use: Characters need to travel a huge distance and are told the quickest way is to use the door shift offered by a hollowed ranger, though doing so will require appeasing the ranger in some way.

GM intrusion: *The character drawn through the hollowed ranger's form to a deathly realm is attacked by a ghost lurking there.*

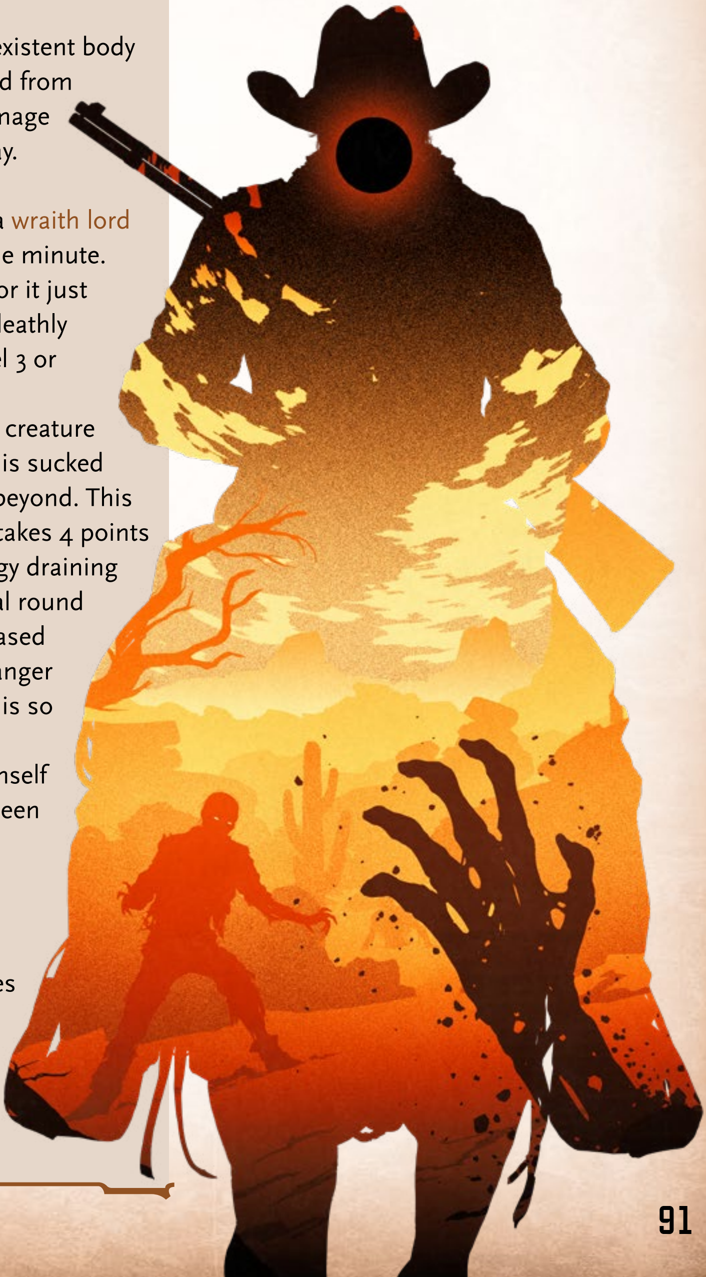
Wraith lord, page 89

Alternatively, a target of Fall Into Oblivion could find itself on the surface of the Tomb Moon.

Tomb Moon, page 178

Ghost, page 331

Additional ghost details: Cypher System Bestiary, *page 44*



RISEN 4 (12)

Risen is also a descriptor that GMs could choose to make available to PCs.

Risen descriptor, page 99

Hell, page 175

GM intrusion: *The character recognizes the risen as someone they personally killed and is dazed with surprise until the end of their next turn, hindering all tasks.*

Deathbinder, page 90

Clawed back into "life" thanks to a promise, an alchemical experiment, or a demonic curse straight out of Hell, risen look normal enough—from a distance. Up close, something ain't right. That's all the more obvious if the risen is someone folks knew before they died.

Risen—also known as the Damned—spook horses and set dogs to growling. They have unblinking eyes like coins and skin the color of a snake's belly, and are naturally as motionless as a corpse when not engaged in an activity. A risen may just want to be left alone, or they could seek to right a wrong, serve as a deathbinder's herald, or ride in an undead posse looking to take as much as they can from a world they know would just as soon put them back in their grave.

Motive: Varies

Environment: Out-of-the-way places

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Combat: A risen makes a long-range pistol attack.

Risen also have one or more of the following additional traits.

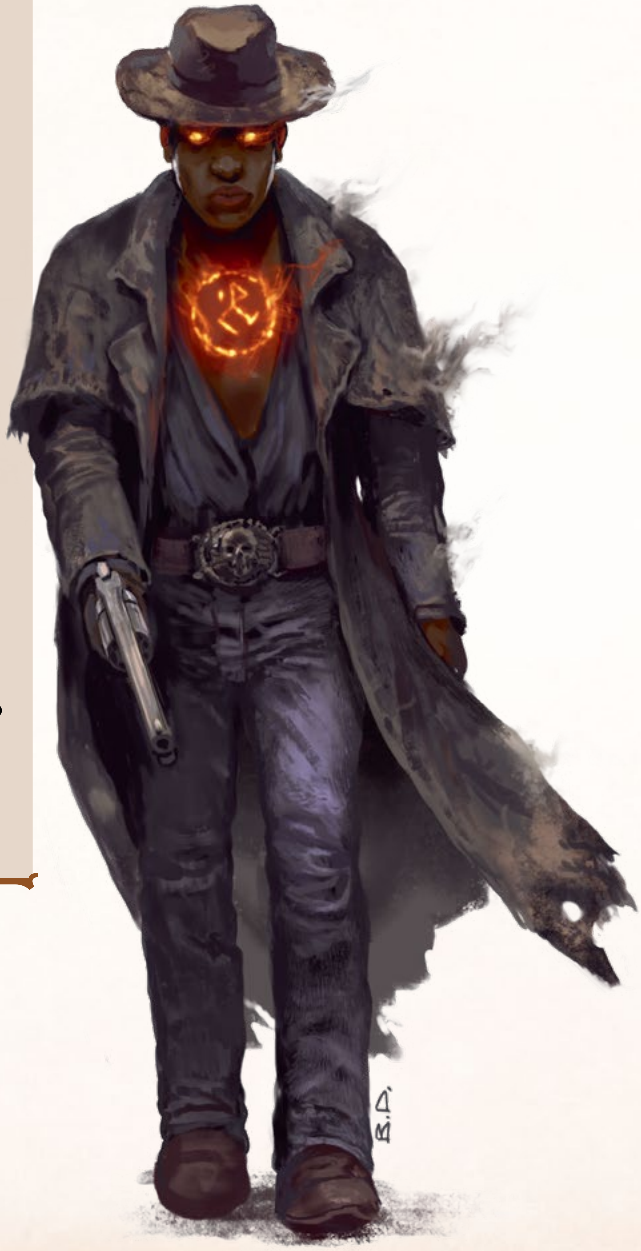
- *Damned Rounds:* Every other attack against PCs is Hell-tainted, blazing with hellfire. If one of these bullets strikes true, the target combusts for an additional 3 points of damage (ignores Armor) each round until an action is taken to smother the flames.
- *Necrovore Resilience:* The first time in an encounter that a risen would normally succumb to their wounds (having lost all their health), they instead remain active and regain 1 health.

In addition, risen don't breathe—drowning, suffocation, and similar threats don't faze them.

- *Sometimes They Come Back:* A destroyed risen might reanimate within a few days, unless its head is removed from its body and separated by a couple of miles, or the body is burned to ash.

Interaction: Risen are rarely excitable; even those bent on mayhem are chillingly quiet as they murder and burn. Some risen are open to negotiation and alliances, while others would as soon shoot as talk.

Use: Folks are concerned because someone who looks a lot like Luke Reynolds has taken up farming at the old Reynolds place, even though outlaws killed the whole family.



RISEN NAMES

Risen generally go by the names they had before they died. Options include:

Alice McCallister, Edward Sage, Gwen Dillon, Jack Hawkins, Abigail Thornton, Lucas McCord, Perdita Lockwood, Virgil Thatcher, Eudora Crenshaw, Calvin Gantry, Lula Hargrave

TOMBDRIFT 5 (15)

Necrovore sand dunes 30 feet (9 m) in diameter are sometimes seeded from those who die in the desert and are buried only by shifting sands. When inactive, it's nearly impossible to distinguish tombdrifts from regular desert dunes. But when one senses life, the necrovore rolls forward like a slow ocean wave, or alternatively, condenses into the shape of the spirit that seeded the undead thing. When assuming the echo of the person who seeded them, tombdrifts might speak. However, keeping such a shape requires energy—the assumed shape is constantly crumbling away and reforming, until it collapses once again into an unquiet, hungry dune.

GM intrusion: *The character is pulled into the dune and is crushed and suffocated for 5 points of ambient damage each round until they can escape with a Might-based roll as their action.*

Banishing round, page 130

Alchemical rounds and slugs, page 129

Motive: Bury the living; feed on life
Environment: Desert and badlands
Health: 23
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Movement: Immediate (but see Dust Devil Speed)
Modifications: Speed defense as level 2 due to size
Combat: The tombdrift abrades every creature in immediate range with scouring sand.

The tombdrift is immune to poison, disease, and life-draining effects.

They also have one or more of the following attacks and traits.

Drain Life: One target damaged by the tombdrift is subject to life drain, taking 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) on a failed Might defense roll. In addition, the target is sickened until the end of their next turn, hindering all tasks. On a successful defense roll, the target still takes 1 point of Speed damage, but isn't sickened.

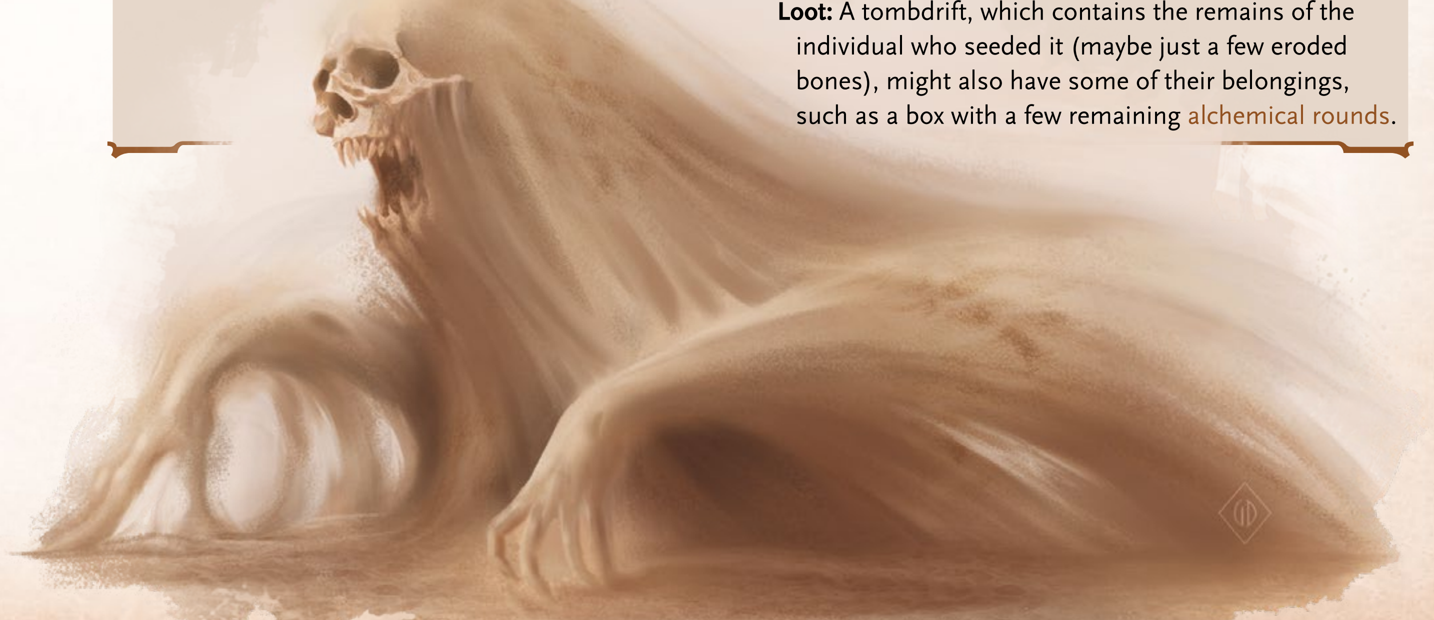
Dust Devil Speed: The tombdrift spins up into a dust devil of sand that speeds forward a long distance (no more than once every minute), attacking all creatures along the line of travel. On a failed Might defense roll, damaged targets are also blinded on their next turn.

Sand Regeneration: Tombdrifts regain 1 health each round they are in a desert or badlands region, unless they've taken damage from banishing rounds or similar anti-undead attacks (in which case they don't begin regaining health again for a couple of minutes).

Interaction: When they take the echo of their former shape, tombdrifts can communicate in rasping voices, and may choose to negotiate with other creatures instead of draining their life. Tombdrifts may want their remains properly buried, or something else. Some tombdrifts don't care or don't remember their lives and simply wish to feed.

Use: A sandstorm blew through the town's cemetery with enough force to rip graves out of the ground. Now, some drifts of sand left in the storm's wake have started moving.

Loot: A tombdrift, which contains the remains of the individual who seeded it (maybe just a few eroded bones), might also have some of their belongings, such as a box with a few remaining alchemical rounds.



SHADE OF THE TOMB 5 (15)

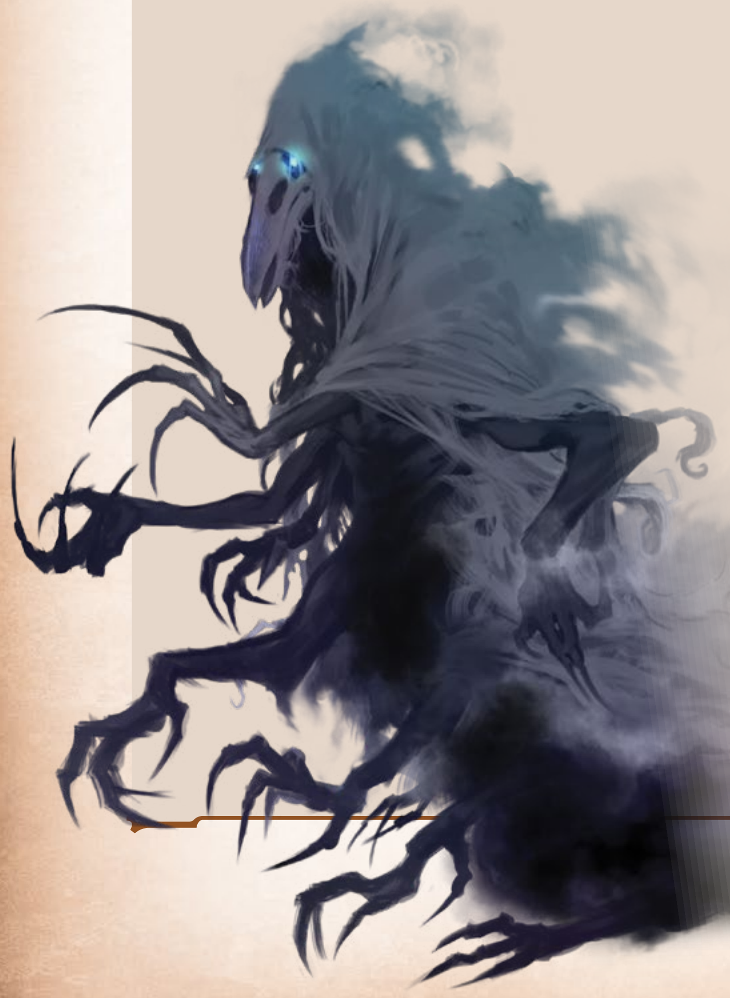
Tomb Moon, page 178

Though thankfully rare, shades of the tomb (commonly called "tomb shades") may spontaneously manifest beneath the dull light of the Tomb Moon, taking form from gravestone shadows. Other times tomb shades are called into brief existence by a summoning spell. When they resolve, they regard the world with the head of an ink-beaked raven, with half a dozen clutching ebony arms emerging from their tenebrous cloak. If need be, a tomb shade can seep through cracks and around barriers that would stymie most corporeal beings.

Motive: Douse other beings' light, life, and joy
Environment: Almost anywhere
Health: 20
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Movement: Short; short when climbing
Modifications: Stealth as level 7
Combat: A tomb shade's touch drains life, inflicting Speed damage (ignores Armor).

In dim light and darkness, a tomb shade only takes 1 point of damage from successful attacks against them.

Individual tomb shades may also have one or more of the following abilities they can use as their action.



Siphon: On a failed Might defense task, a short-range necrotic ray deals 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor), which the shade gains as health, up to their maximum.

Darken: The shade summons magical darkness that blooms from a point within long range (no more than once every ten minutes). The darkness fills an area an immediate distance across and lasts for ten minutes. Even creatures that can normally see in darkness can't see in this magical murk, except for tomb shades and undead.

Anguish: The shade drains happiness and joy from all creatures within immediate range (no more than once per minute). Targets that fail an Intellect defense roll take 5 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and are disconsolate, losing their next turn. Each turn after that they can attempt another Intellect defense roll to regain their composure and act normally.

Portal: The tomb shade dissolves, their animus departing (possibly back to the Tomb Moon). The resulting implosive burst of necrotic energy deals 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) to all creatures within immediate range that fail a Speed defense task. Damaged targets must also succeed on a Might defense roll or be pulled partially through the portal, sustaining 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) each round from the necrotic contact until they can pull free with a successful Might roll as their action. When the last target pulls free (or dies and is pulled through), the portal closes.

Interaction: Sinister and conniving, a tomb shade doesn't speak, but uses its many arms for magical signing, usually only to make threats.

Use: An alchemist wants PCs to collect a cursed book for their library, but whenever someone opens the tome, shadows (a tomb shade) swallow the reader.

PART 2

WEIRD WEST PLAYER CHARACTERS

CHAPTER 7: TYPES AND DESCRIPTORS OF THE WEIRD WEST 96
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CHAPTER 7

TYPES AND DESCRIPTORS OF THE WEIRD WEST

This chapter provides additional type and descriptor options for player characters in a weird west setting. As the GM, you should determine which of these options—if any—you want to make available for your players.

SUGGESTED TYPES FOR A WEIRD WEST GAME

The following roles are built from suggested types and flavors described in the *Cypher System Rulebook*. A few assumptions about the setting are baked into these, the biggest being that the campaign takes place in some alternate version of the American "wild west."

Role	Type
Gunslinger	Warrior
Lawman	Speaker with combat flavor
Teacher	Speaker
Preacher or Mesmerist	Speaker with magic flavor
Actor	Speaker
Prospector	Explorer with combat flavor
Swindler or Gambler	Explorer with stealth flavor
Doctor or Scholar	Explorer with skills and knowledge flavor
Alchemist/Engineer	Adept with technology flavor

ALTERNATE CHARACTER ROLES

If your setting is better described with a comparison "like the shows *Firefly* or *Westworld* but with X," you might consider an alternate slate of roles, possibly types suitable for a science fiction game where PCs can be pilots, scientists, technicians, and so on. Alternatively, a mix of both the roles noted here and those indicated for a science fiction game might work best for your game.

Suggested Types for a Science Fiction Game, page 271

Descriptors, page 38

Species as Descriptor, page 59

DESCRIPTORS

In a weird west setting, as elsewhere, descriptors are designed to provide additional information about how and why characters take actions. Descriptors provide motivation and incentive, and place characters in the starting adventure.

In addition to the descriptors in the *Cypher System Rulebook*, you can widen the options available to the players, allowing them to choose from the descriptors presented here for their characters. A subset of the descriptors in this chapter are species descriptors, which may or may not be appropriate for your players, depending on your setting.

HIGH NOON AT MIDNIGHT DESCRIPTORS

STANDARD

Grizzled
Laconic
Slick
Trailblazing
Trigger-Happy
Unforgiving
Wily

SPECIES

Forgeborn
Risen

SPECIES ADVANCEMENT

The Forgeborn and Risen descriptors include suggestions for how to advance or improve a PC's inherent nature as that sort of creature (becoming even more forgeborn if you are a made being, for example). You can allow a character with such a descriptor to choose any of the indicated abilities (plus any others you feel are appropriate for the descriptor) in place of a type ability, either upon advancing to a new tier, or as a character advancement option in exchange for 4 XP.

FORGEBORN

Forgeborn—also called golems—are animate figures of metal, reanimated flesh, or other normally inert materials. Forgeborn are constructed for a specific purpose; their primary task is often to guard the alchemist that made them. As such, they usually ain't playing with a full deck when it comes to brains. You're different—somehow, you got a fully developed sense of self, and either never had or lost your compulsion to serve your maker. Maybe your alchemist creator emancipated you once they understood your animated form contained a fully realized mind, or maybe you ran away when the chance offered itself. Either way, you're on your own now, choosing your own goals and jobs.

Most folks who see you don't immediately realize you're not on the short leash of someone nearby. Maybe that's fine by you, since that keeps them from interfering in your business or asking too many pesky questions. Other times, you can't help it, and proudly proclaim your independent status to anyone and everyone.

Work with your GM to determine what materials you're made from and what you look like. But even if you're covered in metal, the nature of your particular construction is such that a bullet or blow is nearly as damaging to your workings as to normal flesh. On the other hand, healing magic is magic, and if any is to be had, it works as well on you as anyone else.

You gain the following characteristics:

Durable: +4 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You know your own kind. You are trained in tasks related to interacting with, identifying, tracking, or repairing other forgeborn.

Resistant: You gain two assets to defense rolls to resist effects that would daze or stun you, and you're immune to poison and disease.

Fixable: Even if you are killed, as long as all of your parts are collected, a willing alchemist who spends several days repairing you can bring you back with a successful difficulty 5 Intellect-based roll. However, the GM may decide you have some lasting damage, such as 2 fewer Pool points.

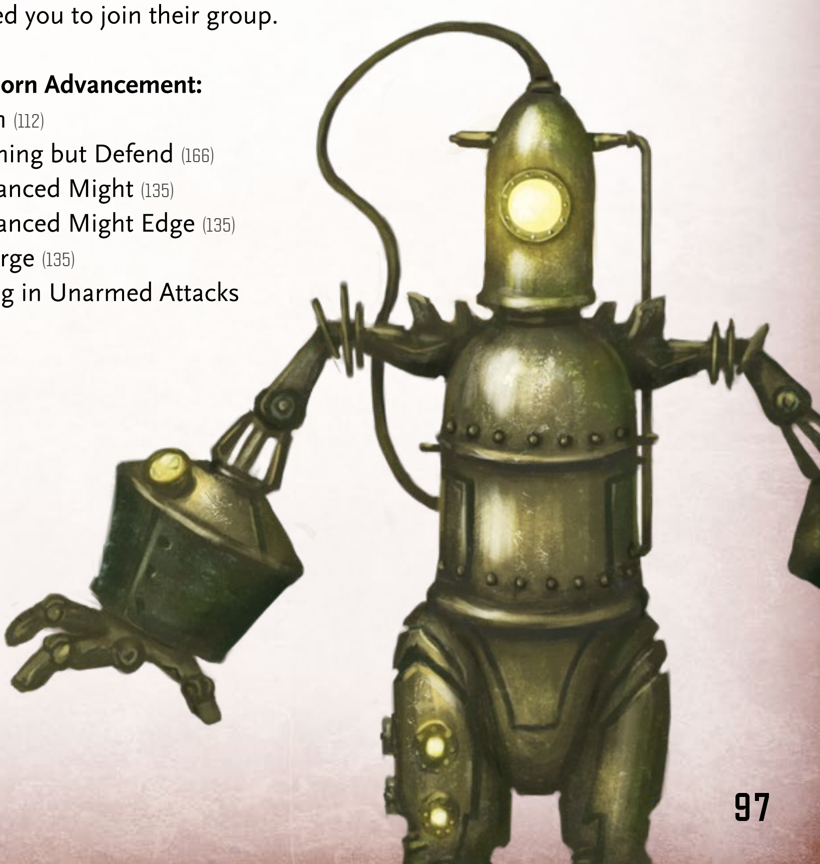
Inability: You're just not as quick as a living creature. Your Speed defense tasks are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

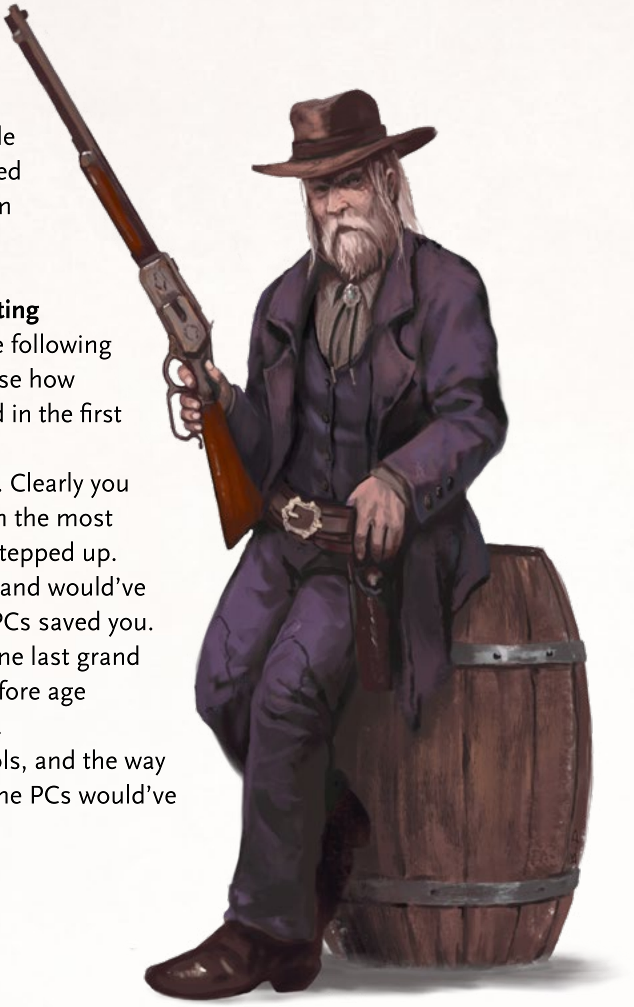
1. Though it's not something they necessarily meant to do, the other PCs' actions gave you your independence, and they asked you along.
2. You were looking for a job, same as any other independent being, and applied to a job posting.
3. You're on the run from your creator, and the PCs' presence allows you to blend in.
4. You were lost. The PCs found you and invited you to join their group.

Forgeborn Advancement:

○ Bash (112)
○ Nothing but Defend (166)
○ Enhanced Might (135)
○ Enhanced Might Edge (135)
○ Enlarge (135)
Training in Unarmed Attacks



GRIZZLED



Life's thrown trials aplenty your way. Yet you're still here. Your skin is sun-kissed and weathered and your hair is streaked with gray, sure, but that just speaks to your resilience. You're seasoned—you've got the wisdom of long experience behind you. Your crinkled eyes only enhance your steely gaze, because you exude the quiet confidence of the battle-tested. 'Course, you've also learned the value of companionship, and your face easily breaks into a warm smile when your friends are nearby.

You gain the following characteristics:

Experienced: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You've seen your share of things. You are trained in local lore and history.

Skill: You've learned to see through folks' mendacity. You are trained in detecting falsehoods.

Try, Try Again: You don't give up easy. You don't have to spend a level of Effort the first time you retry a task, if you don't want to.

Inability: You're getting on in years. Your Might tasks and Might defense rolls are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have collected your share of valuables, but have at least one favorite. You can choose an extra piece of starting equipment (with a value of expensive or less).

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. A job needed doing. Clearly you were the person with the most experience, so you stepped up.
2. You got caught out and would've died, but the other PCs saved you.
3. You're looking for one last grand adventure or two before age catches up with you.
4. You don't suffer fools, and the way things were going, the PCs would've failed without you.

LACONIC

You're a soul of few words—or no words at all, when a shrug or nod will do. Now there's some who'll flap their jaws about everything that comes into their head. Sometimes they get under your skin. But you don't upbraid them; nope—you just frown. You're direct and to the point, avoiding elaboration. You're comfortable with pauses, and when you do speak, your words carry extra weight. All that said—and that's a hell of a lot more than *you* would say—you don't mind other folks. Just their prattle.

You gain the following characteristics:

Deep Waters: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're not easily distracted. You're trained in perception tasks.

Skill: You've got a dry wit. You're trained in positive interaction tasks.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. When you didn't answer, everyone assumed you'd agreed to the job, and so here you are.
2. You lost your poker stake and now you need the money.
3. Of all the folks you've known, the PCs are the least annoying and most accepting of your stillness.
4. You were wrongfully fingered for a crime, and the PCs believed your side of the story.

RISEN

You died. Now you're back. Except not completely—you're what them alchemists call a necrovore, or as regular folks whisper in your wake, Damned. And perhaps you do bear a sigil branded onto your flesh by a demon from Perdition. Maybe your situation is the result of some other curse that pulled you screaming back into animation. Or you might be called back from death due to your own need to finish a task you failed to accomplish before life fled.

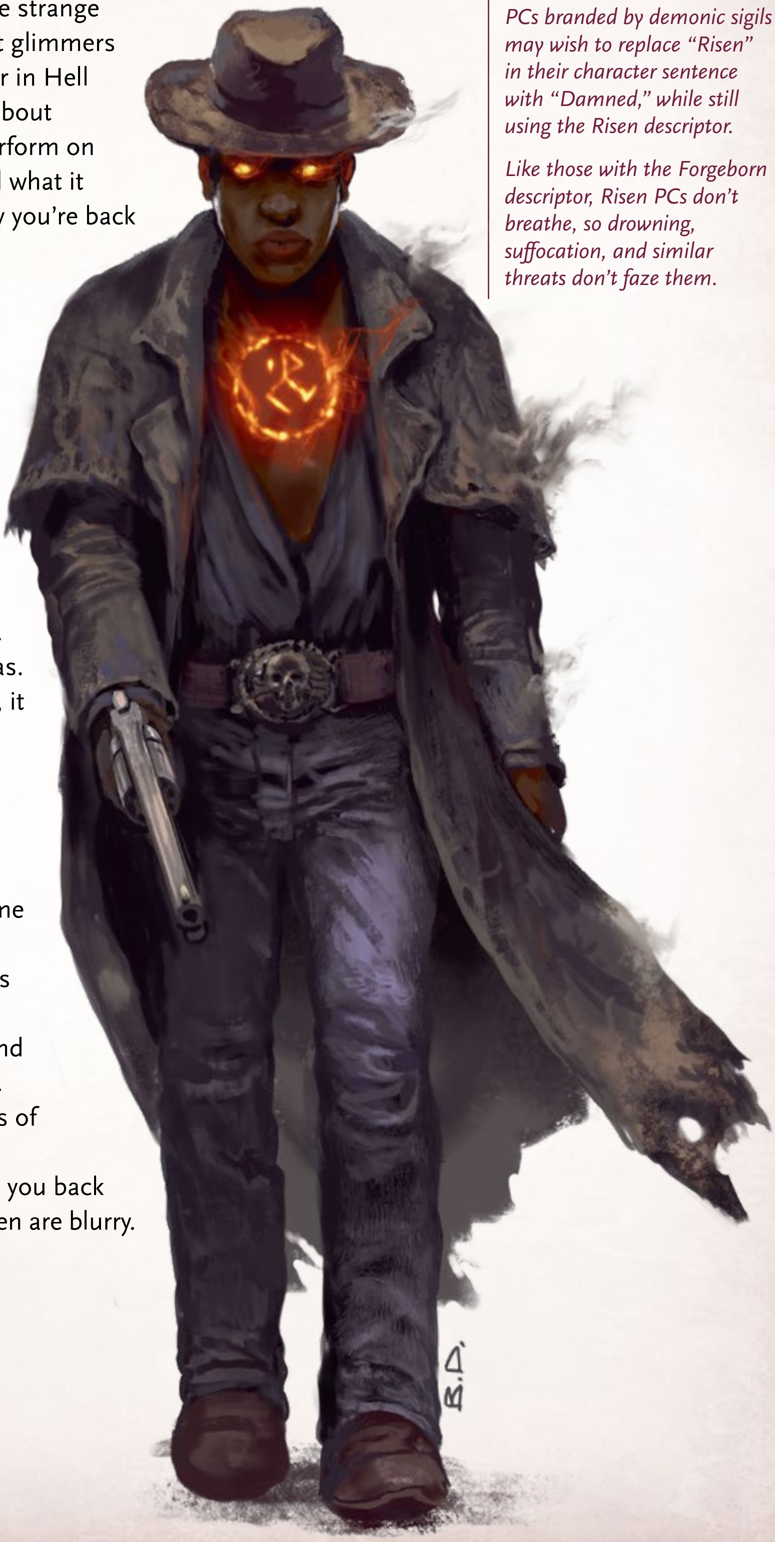
Whatever the cause, you no longer breathe, your eyes dimly shine and blink only when you remember to, and your skin takes on an unnatural pallor.

Perdition, page 172

PCs branded by demonic sigils may wish to replace "Risen" in their character sentence with "Damned," while still using the Risen descriptor.

Like those with the Forgeborn descriptor, Risen PCs don't breathe, so drowning, suffocation, and similar threats don't faze them.

Sigil-Branded: If your existence is a result of some strange demonic machination, you might bear a sigil that glimmers red as a coal. The sigil demonstrates that a power in Hell has laid claim to your soul. Maybe you know all about that demonic power and what tasks you must perform on its account, or not: where the sigil originated and what it portends might be as big a mystery to you as why you're back among the living in the first place.



You gain the following characteristics:

Hell Hide: +1 to your Armor.

Deathless Resilience: When you're debilitated, you can still act as if you were only impaired, even if your Speed is at 0. You're still killed if you descend three steps on the damage track.

Sometimes You Come Back: If you descend three steps on the damage track, you can spend 2 XP to return to animation at some point the GM chooses within the next few days.

Stiff as Death: You ain't as supple as you once was. Anytime you apply a level of Effort using Speed, it costs 1 additional point of Speed.

Inability: Something ain't right about you. Your positive interaction tasks and tasks related to interacting with animals are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. When everyone else ran away from you, the PCs stayed to learn more about your situation.
2. You saw the PCs struggling with a necrovore and decided to show them not all undead were bad.
3. The choice was between a half-life on the edges of society and joining the PCs' mission.
4. The PCs knew you before you died and wanted you back again even though your memories from back then are blurry.

Risen Advancement:

○ Absorb Kinetic Energy (108)
○ Improved Recovery (152)
○ See the Unseen (180)
○ Speaker for the Dead (184)
○ Repair Flesh (176)
○ Not Dead Yet (166)

SLICK

You've got a silver tongue. Some of that's down to natural talent, but your polished persona is mostly a product of constant practice. You've spent long hours mastering your ability to manipulate games of chance, run elaborate confidence games to get the better of your enemies, and hold yourself confidently. Plus, you've learned how to dress well—a well-turned-out individual is always taken more seriously, or such has been your experience, so you usually dress to impress.

You gain the following characteristics:

Glib: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in deception; you can apply this training to games of chance where an element of bluffing is involved, such as poker.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving positive or pleasant social interaction.

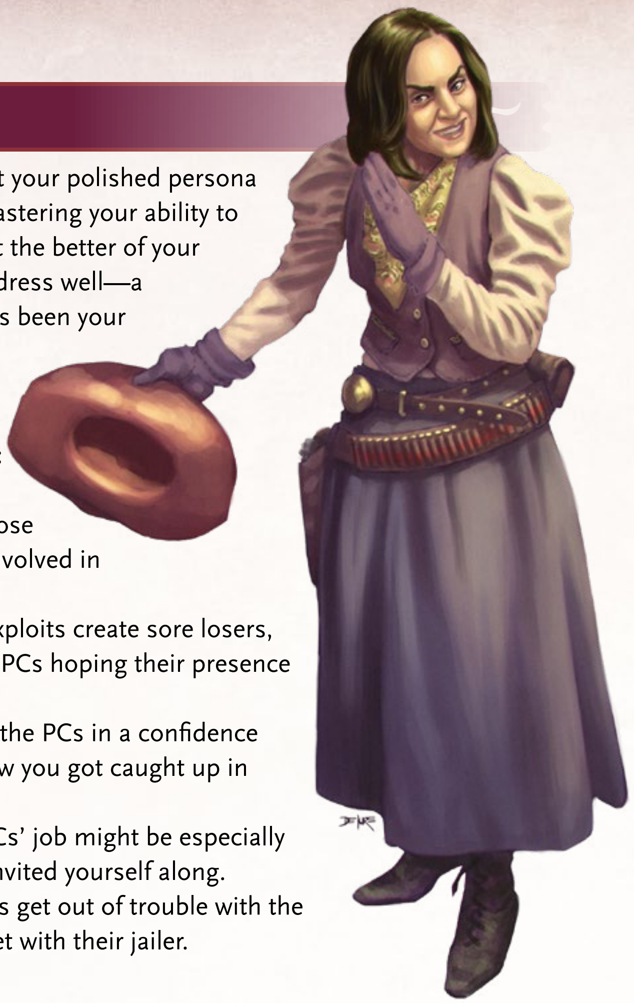
Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving identifying or assessing danger, lies, quality, importance, function, or power.

Inability: You do not willingly enter dangerous situations. Any initiative actions (to determine who goes first in combat) are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have a set of expensive clothing ideal for any occasion where you wish to dress to impress.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Sometimes your exploits create sore losers, and you joined the PCs hoping their presence would protect you.
2. You tried to fleece the PCs in a confidence game, but somehow you got caught up in their mission.
3. You realized the PCs' job might be especially lucrative and you invited yourself along.
4. You helped the PCs get out of trouble with the law by winning a bet with their jailer.



TRAILBLAZING

You ain't afraid to explore badlands, high plains, or weirder locales. That's down to your pioneering spirit. Others like to stick close to what's known, but you like to ride out to see places others can't even imagine. Fear of the unknown is something you just don't understand; it's the *known* that makes you afraid. Spending too much time in one place makes you itchy and irritable. You live for the next time you're blazing a fresh trail, scouting a new territory, and coming around another bend just to see what's up ahead.

You gain the following characteristics:

Hearty: +2 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You're trained in wilderness navigation tasks, including finding your way through unknown locations.

Skill: You're trained in identifying creatures and plants, including cursed beasts and strange folk.

Skill: You're trained in perception tasks.

Inability: You're easily bored. Tasks requiring sustained attention of one or more minutes are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have a hand compass.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You were hired by the PCs to guide them to a strange location.
2. You have reason to believe that journeying with the other PCs will lead you to many more places unknown to you.
3. The one time you got in trouble out on your own, the PCs happened by and saved you.
4. You saw the PCs from afar, figured something interesting was happening, and wanted to be part of it.

Cursed beasts, page 79

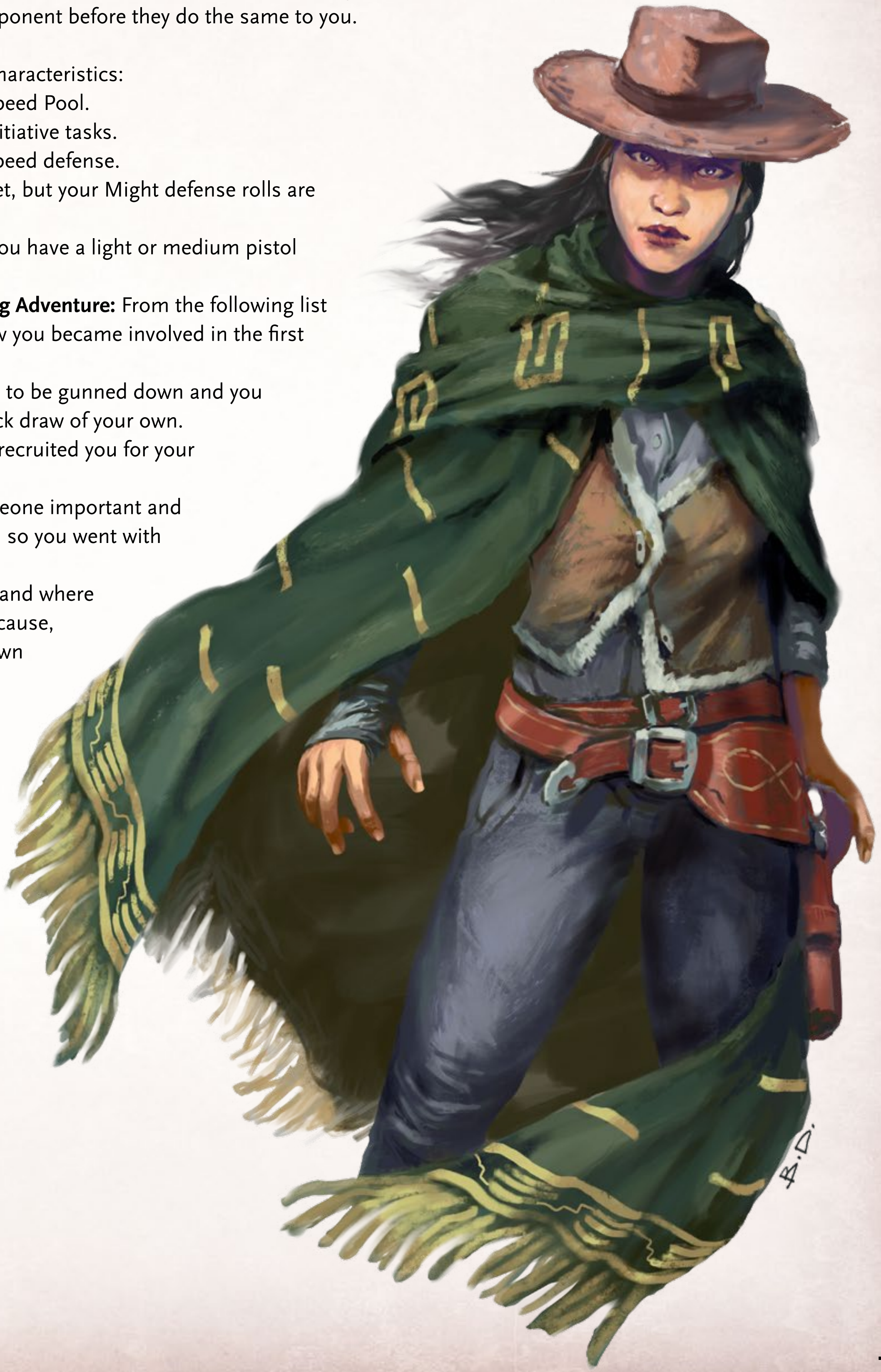
Strange Folk in the Wilderness, page 47

TRIGGER-HAPPY

You're not just fast, you're *lightning* fast. Quick-thinking and nimble, you're swift to act in critical situations—chiefly, when you're in a showdown with another gunslinger. Some say you're a little too fast on the draw. But any time folks call you "trigger-happy" as if it's a put-down, you just smile, because they're burnishing your reputation. Your rapid reaction time comes in handy in all sorts of situations. 'Course, nothing is ever as important as putting a bullet in an opponent before they do the same to you.

You gain the following characteristics:
Breakneck: +2 to your Speed Pool.
Skill: You're trained in initiative tasks.
Skill: You're trained in Speed defense.
Inability: You may be fleet, but your Might defense rolls are hindered.
Additional Equipment: You have a light or medium pistol (your choice).
Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Another PC was about to be gunned down and you saved them with a quick draw of your own.
2. One of the other PCs recruited you for your unique talents.
3. You hurt or killed someone important and had to get out of town, so you went with the PCs.
4. You showed up when and where you did on a dare—because, hey, you don't back down from dares.



UNFORGIVING

They done you wrong and you ain't gonna rest until they've paid the price. Maybe the crime or betrayal that befell you was long ago, and you've been looking for the perpetrators' trail ever since, with only limited luck. Or maybe it happened recently, when your life as you knew it ended. Did you lose a spouse? A child? A community?

You go about other tasks in the meantime, but you've become someone with an extra, underlying goal: vengeance. If you can only figure out who deserves it and/or where they're hiding, and/or maybe even who they are in the first place.

Revenge, page 249

Vengeance Achieved? Work with your GM if you'd prefer this descriptor to be part of a revenge character arc. If so, vengeance may be something you can achieve and move on from, at which point it might be appropriate to change out your descriptor. Then again, you might have been Unforgiving so long that you're set in your ways.

You gain the following characteristics:

Tragedy-Toughened: +2 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You scare other folks. You're trained in intimidation tasks.

Skill: You've learned to tell when others shade the truth. You're trained in detecting falsehoods.

Skill: You're always on the lookout. You're trained in tracking tasks.

Inability: You don't care enough to be polite. Your positive interaction tasks are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have an additional medium weapon.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. The other PCs are hunting the same outlaws as you, though they may have different reasons.
2. You found the PCs instead of the one(s) you're tracking, and they needed help.
3. It's something to do until you find another clue to help you along your path.
4. You have no idea how you joined the PCs. You're going along with it until a chance to gain vengeance presents itself.

WILY

You're a real sly dog if ever there was one. Quick-thinking and hard to cheat, folks would be plum foolish to take what you say at face value, 'cept for your friends, of course. You know how to work most any situation to your advantage. You're not so much a silver-tongued devil as you are a few steps ahead of whatever's about to happen. Others rely on their looks or their charm to get ahead in the world, and you can't help but smirk when you consider their shortcomings. No sir, for you, it's all about that gray stuff between your ears.

You gain the following characteristics:

Crafty: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: Always looking for an advantage, you're trained in all interactions involving lies or trickery.

Skill: Seeing things as they really are is the first step in outfoxing others. You're trained in perception tasks.

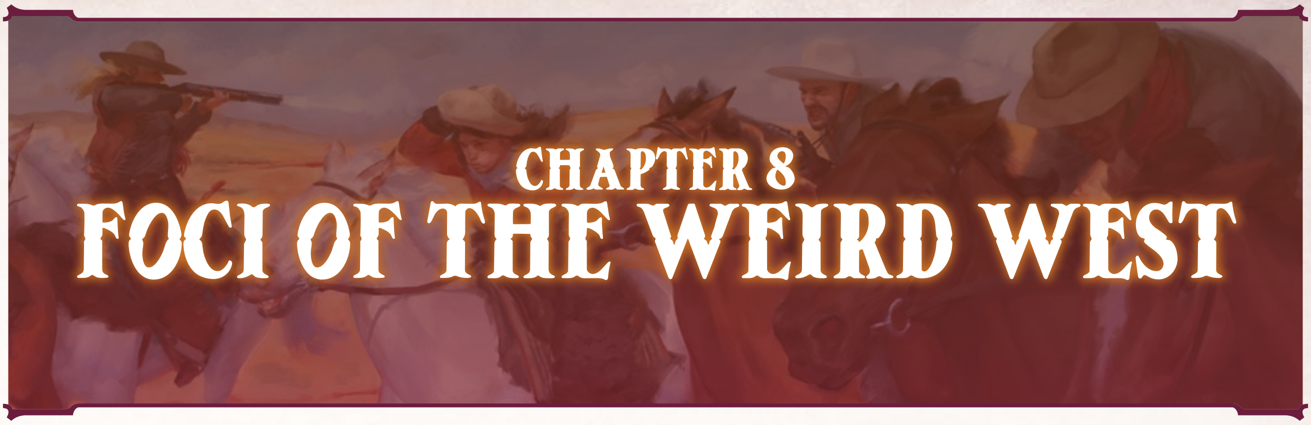
Hunch: When you apply a level of Effort using Intellect to a non-combat task, you can also choose to apply a free level of Effort once. The ability is restored after you make a recovery roll.

Inability: You pay a little too much attention, even to things you shouldn't. Your Intellect defense rolls are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You acquired an item another PC lost and thinks is gone for good. Now you have an additional expensive item, assuming you don't choose to give it back to the PC who lost it.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Your wily plan convinced the other PCs to join your mission.
2. Although you won, your scheme angered nearby outlaws, and the PCs are the only reason you lived.
3. You told the PCs you would double their profits on their next job if they allowed you in on it.
4. You're one hundred percent certain the other PCs will fail if you don't come along.



CHAPTER 8

FOCI OF THE WEIRD WEST

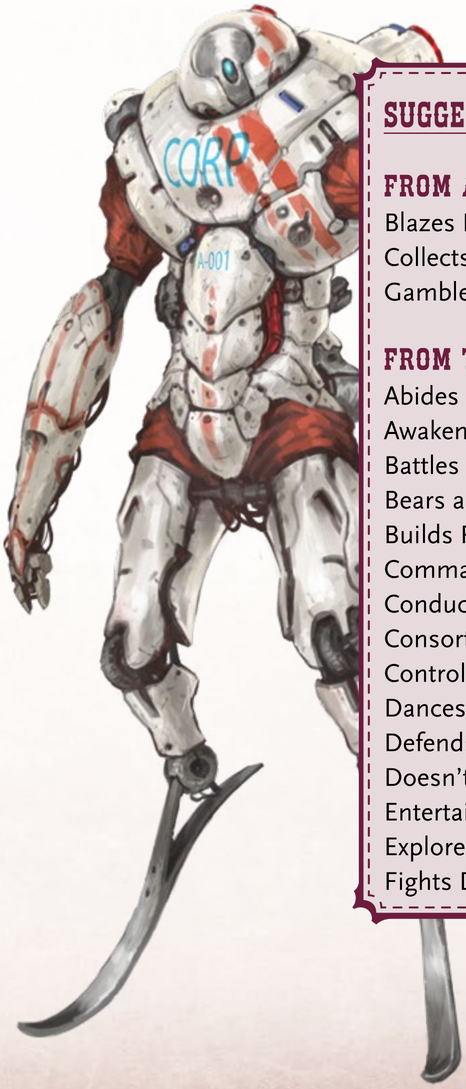
This chapter presents new weird west foci that can be used as-is in any setting that features paranormal and wild western themes. Because these new foci were created specifically for the weird west genre, each has an expanded description with more story details than the foci in the *Cypher System Rulebook* (which have short, broad descriptions suitable for being adapted to many different genres).

The GM and player should adjust focus details to suit the specific campaign. For instance, at first blush, you might decide the Builds Robots and Battles Robots foci aren't appropriate to your weird west campaign because magic is featured in the setting, not advanced tech. But on second thought, you decide they actually *are* appropriate for your campaign (and for The Ghost Range setting included in this book), because in your game "robots" are "forgeborn," and a PC who Builds Forgeborn is probably an alchemist.

Builds Robots, page 65

Battles Robots, page 64

The Ghost Range, page 144



SUGGESTED FOCI FOR A WEIRD WEST GAME

FROM *HIGH NOON AT MIDNIGHT*

Blazes Paths
Collects Bounties
Gambles It All Away
Hits the Saloon
Rides Like the Wind
Spits Fire and Lead
Strikes Like a Rattler

FROM THE *CYPHER SYSTEM RULEBOOK*

Abides in Stone
Awakens Dreams
Battles Robots
Bears a Halo of Fire
Builds Robots
Commands Mental Powers
Conducts Weird Science
Consorts With the Dead
Controls Beasts
Dances With Dark Matter
Defends the Weak
Doesn't Do Much
Entertains
Explores Dark Places
Fights Dirty
Helps Their Friends
Howls at the Moon
Hunts
Interprets the Law
Is Idolized by Millions
Is Licensed to Cary
Is Wanted by the Law
Leads
Learns Quickly
Lives in the Wilderness
Looks for Trouble
Masters Weaponry
Metes Out Justice
Murders
Never Says Die
Rages
Runs Away
Shepherds the Community
Shepherds Spirits
Slays Monsters
Was Foretold
Wields Two Weapons at Once
Works for a Living
Works the Back Alleys

BLAZES PATHS

You read the land. You know every twisted arroyo, spiny cactus, and change in the weather. And what you don't know, you soon learn by sniffing the wind, tasting the dirt, and squinting across the wilderness landscapes. As you go, you mark the way for others to follow, notching trees or scribing stones with your personal symbol. As you become more and more accomplished, the network of trails you've blazed enhances not only your reputation as a pathfinder, but also your personal spiritual strength, allowing you to see what's happening along them, to flash along the miles you blazed in mere moments, and even return to the first time you ever set foot on a trail.

Focus Connections, page 61

Connection: Choose one of the following, or choose one of the Focus Connections in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

1. Pick one other PC. For some reason, whenever that character stands right next to you, your navigation tasks are hindered.
2. Pick one other PC. You're not sure how they found out, but that character knows about the one time you got lost and couldn't find your way without help.
3. Pick one other PC. Seeing you use your focus abilities triggers memories in them of having grown up someplace completely different than where they previously remembered. That memory is up to the other PC. If the memory is weird enough, they may want your help to find a way back there.
4. Pick one other PC. You found them close to death while you were blazing a path out in the wilderness. They either have no memory of what led them to that spot, or ended up there for a harrowing reason—it's up to that PC.

A character who Blazes Paths discovers that the more trails they mark, the more their abilities come in handy. Which is why such a character should consider spending a little extra time when the situation allows blazing symbols connecting even unlikely trails, such as those that lead through town, to the saloon, and even along an already well-traveled road.

Additional Equipment: You have a hatchet, blue dye, and a brush—all equipment you use to blaze your trails in the wilderness.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You restore 2 points to your Speed Pool.

Major Effect Suggestion: An ally or indicated target can immediately move up to a short distance.

Blazes Paths GM intrusions: *Elements or other individuals sometimes destroy blaze markers. Ambushes sometimes are set along marked trails.*

TIER 1

Pathfinder Skills: You are trained in your choice of two of the following skills: blazing, navigation, perception, initiative, sensing danger, or tracking. You can choose this ability multiple times, but you must select different skills each time. Enabler.

TIER 2

Happy Trails: Whether you're traveling along a path you've previously marked, or you're navigating and blazing a new trail, roaming with you puts your companions at ease. During rests on any day you've traveled together, you and your party gain +1 to your recovery rolls. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice: Choose either Trail Awareness or Trail Sensor as your tier 3 ability.

Trail Awareness: Your connection with trails you've blazed is always with you. When traveling on, camping near, or within visual range of any trail you've blazed, you gain an asset on one attack or defense roll thanks to your knowledge about what else is using the path. Once used, this ability renews after your next recovery roll. Enabler.

Trail Sensor (3 Intellect points): You imbue a newly created blaze symbol (or replace a blaze symbol you've previously created) with a spiritual connection to your mind's eye. For the next 24 hours, you can concentrate to see, hear, and smell through the sensor, no matter how far you move from it. If you also have a similar ability from another source, this effect lasts twice as long. The sensor doesn't grant you sensory capabilities beyond the norm. A few rounds to create the enhanced blaze symbol; action to check.

TIER 4

Blaze Door (5+ Intellect points): You can instantly transport yourself between two blaze symbols you've previously marked, as long as you use this ability while within immediate range of one of your symbols. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to bring other people within immediate range with you; each level of Effort used in this way affects up to three additional targets. Action.

TIER 5

Blaze Recovery: You gain an additional one-action recovery roll if you take it within long range of a blaze symbol you've made. Once you've used this ability, you can't use it again until after your next ten-hour recovery roll. Enabler.

ADDITIONAL WEIRD WEST CONNECTIONS

How the PCs know each other might come down to their connections, including those customized to the weird west, as in the suggestions that follow. PCs can choose from these in addition to the options noted for their foci—or in lieu of the Focus Connections presented in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

PCs usually choose a connection with other PCs when they pick a focus. Players can choose from traditional focus connections, and/or you could offer them one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. They always stable your horse for you when you can't be there.
2. Pick one other PC. You are pretty sure they used to run with an outlaw gang. It's up to you whether you want to talk to them about it.
3. Pick one other PC. They rescued you from cursed beasts: a den of wolves the size of horses.
4. Pick one other PC. You two were scheduled for a showdown, but other things happened. It's up to you (and them) whether that's still something you want to go through with one day.
5. Pick one other PC. You've heard tall tales about how they once rode a tornado.
6. Pick one other PC. You once went through their saddlebags, found their last cigar, and smoked it. The guilt has been weighing on you.

TIER 6

Ability Choice: Choose either Step Across Time or Trail Cypher as your tier 6 ability.

Step Across Time (7+ Intellect points): While you are within immediate range of any blaze symbol you've previously marked, you and up to three willing characters who are next to you travel to a point of your choosing earlier in time, when you were all traveling on the same trail the marker is part of or a connecting trail. When you appear in the past, you do so at the location you were along the trail then, replacing earlier versions of yourself in so doing. Upon arriving at your temporal destination, you and your fellow time travelers are stunned (and unable to act) for one minute. Using this ability is usually a one-way trip. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to bring additional people with you; each level of Effort used in this way affects up to three additional targets. Action.

Trail Cypher: Choose one cypher that you carry. The cypher must have an effect that is not instantaneous. You destroy the cypher and embed its power into a trail you've blazed. Any time you are on that trail or a connecting trail, you gain the effect of that cypher continuously. You can choose a cypher when you gain this ability, or you can wait and make the choice later. However, once you embed a cypher into your system of trails, you cannot later switch to a different cypher—the ability works only once. Action to initiate.

BLAZING

Blazing a trail means marking an individual stone, canyon wall, or tree to indicate the next segment of the path. Creating a symbol is the work of a few rounds. Individual blaze markers are usually no more than a very long distance from each other; in any event, no more than one marker should ever be visible at any one time. Your skill in blazing contributes to how successful your symbols are in leading others along the path you've indicated. Generally, blazing a trail doesn't significantly slow your travel across the landscape.

Any use of Step Across Time that would create a paradox instead branches the travelers into a brand-new timeline, and they're unable to reach their original timeline past the point where it branched.

COLLECTS BOUNTIES

You know just where to look to find the latest wanted posters. Each one that goes up on the side of the jail or the wall of the post office is potentially another job and another reward. But money's only half the deal—you also do it for the rush when you finally apprehend someone you've tracked across three territories. Some folks prefer to collect bounties without any undue fuss. But it wouldn't be fun if those you stalk don't put up a fight when you finally find them. And if it's a fight, well, they'd best watch themselves. Most bounties you take on are advertised as dead or alive. You'd prefer them alive so they can face justice, but if it's down to you or them, that's no choice at all.

Overwatch, page 168

Connection: Choose one of the following, or choose one of the Focus Connections in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

1. Pick one other PC. They accidentally provided information to a competing bounty hunter that lost you a quarry with a particularly lucrative reward.
2. Pick one other PC. You happened to see a few documents while tracking down something unrelated, which leads you to believe they're not exactly who they claim to be. You've since grown comfortable with them, but remain vigilant in case they turn out to be dangerous.
3. Pick one other PC. They rescued you from a train when outlaws blew it up, pulling you out of the wreckage at great risk to themself.
4. Pick one other PC. They know a secret story about your past that doesn't reflect especially well on your character. But back then, you were young and stupid. Not like today. Right?

Additional Equipment: Heavy leather duster (light armor).

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your attack against a foe is eased.

Major Effect Suggestion: Make an immediate extra attack on your target.

TIER 1

Seek and Hide: Tasks for tracking, looking for, or hiding from other creatures are eased. Enabler.

Know Where It Hurts: You inflict 1 additional point of damage against targets you've successfully tracked, hidden from, used Overwatch on, or studied for one full action. Enabler.

TIER 2

Ignore the Pain: You ignore the impaired condition and treat the debilitated condition as impaired. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice: Choose either Let Them Try or Surprise Attack as your tier 3 ability.

Let Them Try: They usually don't give up without a fight. You are trained in Speed defense tasks. If your foe is someone you've successfully interacted with (as noted under Know Where It Hurts), your Speed defense tasks against them also gain an asset. Enabler.

Surprise Attack: If attacking from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before your opponent has acted, you get an asset on the attack. On a successful hit, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

TIER 4

Total Awareness: You possess such a high level of awareness that it's very difficult to surprise, hide from, or sneak up on you. When you apply a level of Effort to initiative and perception tasks, you gain two free levels of Effort. Enabler.

TIER 5

Free to Move: You ignore all movement penalties and adjustments due to terrain or other obstacles. You can fit through any space large enough to fit your head. You can apply three free levels of Effort to tasks involving breaking free of bonds, a creature's grip, or any similar impediment. Enabler.

TIER 6

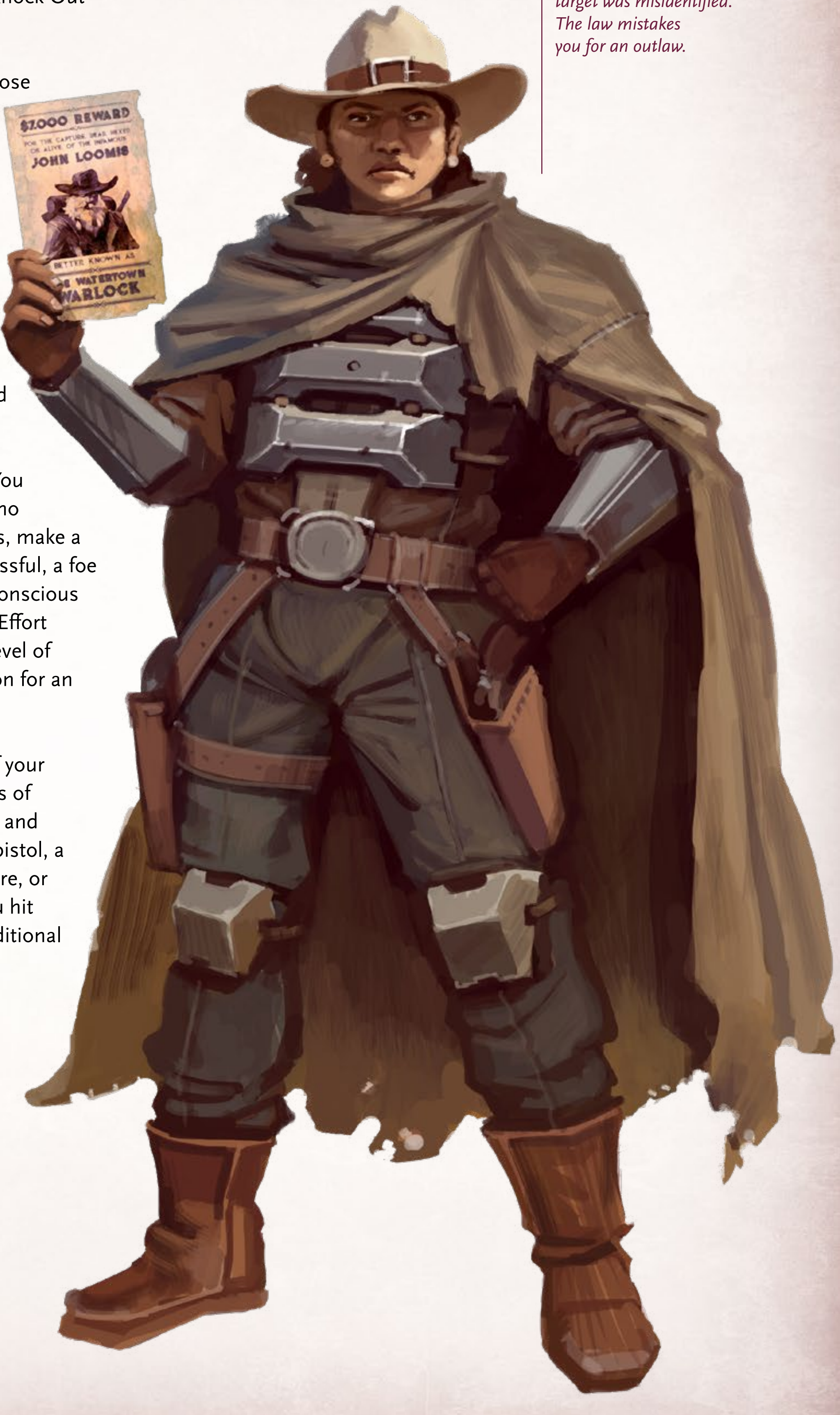
Ability Choice: Choose either Greater Skill With Attacks or Lethal Damage as a tier 6 ability. Either way, you also gain Knock Out as a complementary tier 6 ability.

Greater Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack, even one in which you are already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. If you're already trained in that type of attack, you instead are specialized in that type of attack. Enabler.

Knock Out (5+ Might points): You make a melee attack that inflicts no damage. Instead, if the attack hits, make a second Might-based roll. If successful, a foe of level 3 or lower is knocked unconscious for one minute. For each level of Effort used, you can affect one higher level of foe, or you can extend the duration for an additional minute. Action.

Lethal Damage: Choose one of your existing attacks that inflicts points of damage (depending on your type and focus, this might be a particular pistol, a special ability such as a blast of fire, or your unarmed attacks). When you hit with that attack, you inflict an additional 5 points of damage. Enabler.

Collects Bounties GM intrusions: *A weapon misfires. Your documents are not in order. The target was misidentified. The law mistakes you for an outlaw.*



GAMBLES IT ALL AWAY

How long have you been haunting the card tables? Seems like a lifetime. You probably played your first hand of poker before you could even read words. People, though, were much easier to understand. You could always read other folks' tells, whether that's squinting, tapping, stammering, pulling at their earlobe, or any of a thousand other ways you know when to call their bluffs.

Which is not to say you haven't walked away from the table in the hole. But you've always been able to make it up later. So far, anyway. Lately, you've been having weird dreams of loss and void. Is Lady Luck fixin' to turn her back on you? You hope not, because there ain't nothing in the world keeping you from gambling it all away.

Connection: Choose one of the following, or choose one of the Focus Connections in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

1. Pick one other PC. They beat you in a game of cards or dice when you totally thought you had them figured out. You befriended them rather than taking it personally (though it's possible you've won that and more back since).
2. Pick one other PC. Whenever they sit next to you, Lady Luck seems to notice. Sometimes your tasks are eased, other times hindered, and you never know ahead of time how things will go for a given game.
3. Pick one other PC. This character doesn't seem to care for how you make your living at the card tables.
4. Pick one other PC. When you were hurt by another gambler whose clock you cleaned, they stood up for you at great risk to themself.

Additional Equipment: A deck of especially fine playing cards.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your next gambling, wagering, or similar task is eased.

Major Effect Suggestion: You win a wager.

TIER 1

Gambler: You are trained in a table game in which you are not already trained. Choose from the following: poker, twenty-one, farro, craps, blackjack, roulette, baccarat, or another game where gambling on the outcome is part of play. Enabler.

Interaction Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: deceiving, persuading, public speaking, seeing through deception, or intimidation. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

TIER 2

Courting Lady Luck: Maybe Lady Luck's watching over you and keeping you from harm, or maybe you're just damn lucky. When you would otherwise descend a step on the damage track, make an Intellect defense roll against the level of the foe or effect. If you succeed, you do not descend that step. If the step was because you fell to 0 points in a Pool, you are still at 0 points; you just don't suffer the negative effects of being impaired or debilitated. If you would otherwise descend the final step on the damage track to death, a successful defense roll keeps you at 1 point in one Pool, and you remain debilitated. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice: Choose either Call Their Bluff or Card Genius as your tier 3 ability.

Call Their Bluff (3 Intellect points): Are they bluffing or can they back up their claim? It doesn't really matter when you fix your stare on a target within long range. If your Intellect attack succeeds, the target suffers 2 points of ambient damage each round for one minute or until the target can throw off the effect (PC targets suffer Intellect damage). If you use your action on a subsequent round to fully concentrate on the target, their attempts to throw off the effect are hindered and they take 4 points of ambient damage that round. Action to initiate.

Card Genius: The more you gamble, the sharper your mind becomes. You gain +5 to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

TIER 4

○ **Winning Hand (4 Intellect Points):** If you win a hand of cards or other wager, or if you succeed on an Intellect defense roll to resist a foe's attack, you gain an action. You can use it immediately even if you have already taken a turn in the round. You can use this ability once per round. Enabler.

TIER 5

○ **Consequences of Luck (5+ Intellect points):** It used to be easier to be lucky all the time. Now, it takes a toll. When you roll a 1, you can reroll. If you reroll and roll a 1, 2, or 3, you *must* reroll again, this time expending a level of Effort plus the base Pool cost to activate this ability (5 Intellect points). If you roll a 1–5 on the second reroll, you must reroll again, expending a level of Effort and spending the base cost again (5 Intellect points), too. This progression of forced rerolls coupled with an increasing failure range continues until you roll higher than the failure range or you run out of Intellect points. (If the target number you roll is below the failure range, you might succeed on the task, but the forced-rerolling continues.) Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice: Choose either Fate Breaker or Gambling God as your tier 6 ability.

○ **Fate Breaker:** Something beyond your ken takes an interest in you. If you fail on a task (including an attack or a defense), you can change the die result to a natural 20. (That still might not be enough to succeed if the difficulty is higher than 6.) This ability doesn't work if you roll a natural 1 for an attempted task, unless you reroll using Consequences of Luck and obtain a result that isn't in the failure range. Once you use this ability, it is not available again until after you make a ten-hour recovery roll. Enabler.

○ **Gambling God:** Any time you use Effort on an Intellect action, add one of the following enhancements to the action (your choice):

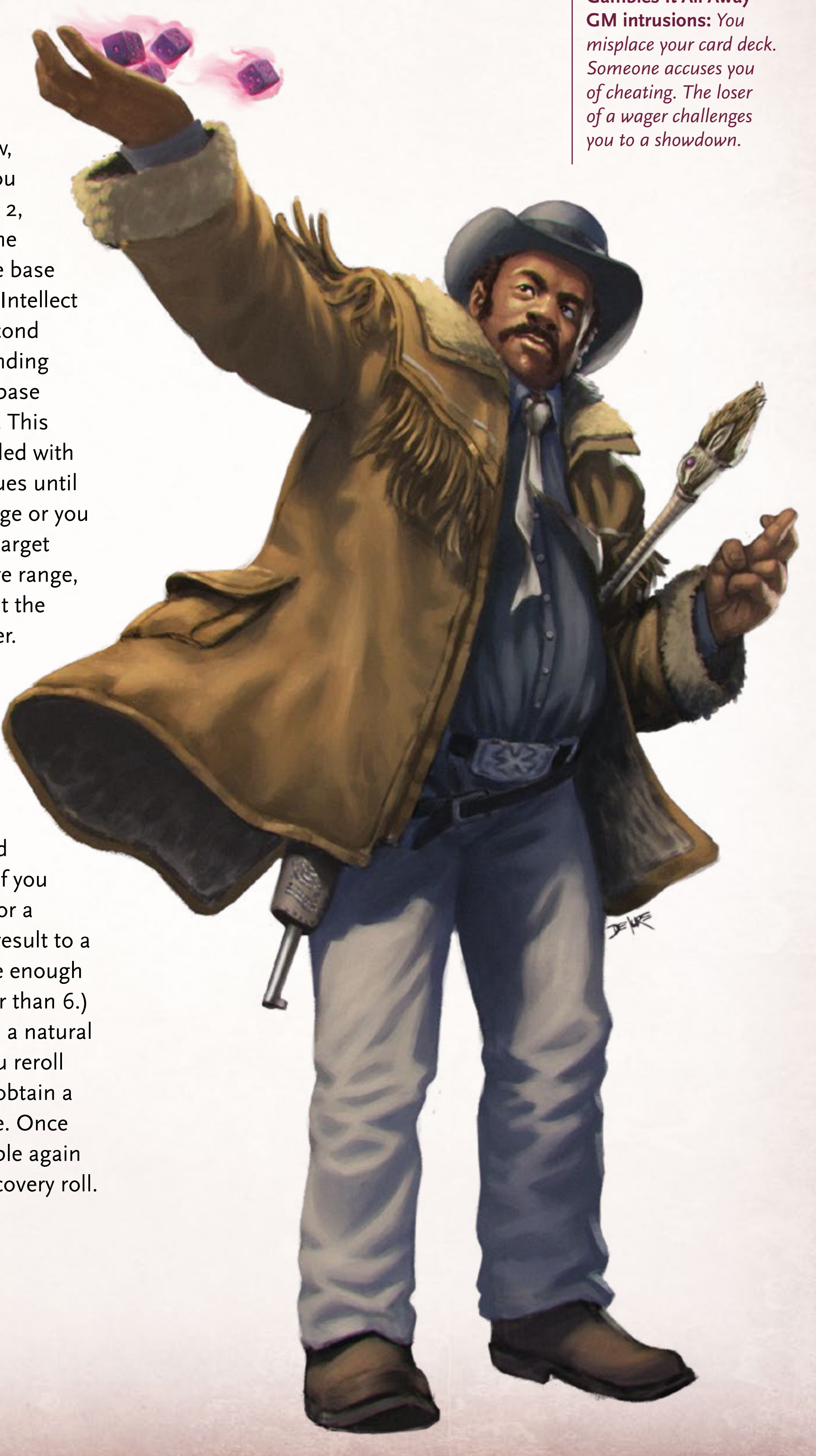
- Free level of Effort
- Automatic minor effect

Enabler.

Free level of Effort, page 209

Minor effect, page 211

Gambles It All Away GM intrusions: *You misplace your card deck. Someone accuses you of cheating. The loser of a wager challenges you to a showdown.*



HITS THE SALOON

The saloon is an old friend, whether or not you visit the same one twice. Whatever the name on the sign out front, the pungent smells of whiskey, cigars, and sawdust lift your spirits like nothing else. 'Cept for actual spirits, of course. When that first shot hits your throat and sets a warm blaze in your belly, you can't keep a smile from your lips. This here's your home away from home, and inside are your friends, both old and those soon to be made. Though not everyone's happy to see you—troublemakers soon learn that in a scrap, you only hit harder with each shot of whiskey you pour down your throat.

Connection: Choose one of the following, or choose one of the Focus Connections in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

1. Pick one other PC. This character has spent a lot of time with you saloon-hopping. Once between any ten-hour rest, you gain an additional asset when you collaborate on the same task, fight the same foe, and so on.
2. Pick one other PC. You saw them get their ass whooped in a saloon fight once, though they didn't know you saw it. You can choose whether or not to share that information.
3. Pick one other PC. You and this character once had a terrible drunken argument that neither of you remember exactly, but neither can you let it go. Once between any ten-hour rest (when the GM chooses), an action is hindered when you collaborate on the same task, fight the same foe, and so on.
4. Pick one other PC. This character has still never visited your favorite saloon, and you've promised to take them one day. Whether or not the character is interested is up to them.

Intoxication Track, page 66

Additional Equipment: You carry a sturdy, leak-proof metallic whiskey flask.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You don't have to use an action to activate your next Jovial Presence ability.

Major Effect Suggestion: You remember something a stranger in a saloon once said, and you can ask the GM one question about what you're looking at.

TIER 1

Jovial Presence (2 Intellect points): You observe or study a creature, object, or location for at least one round. The next time you interact with it (possibly in the following round), a related task (such as persuading the creature, attacking it, or defending from its attack) is eased. If you're in a saloon, the task is eased by two steps. Action.

Enthusiastic Listener: You pick up stuff listening to folks gab in the bar. You are trained in one area of knowledge of your choice. Enabler.

TIER 2

Blitzer: You inflict 2 additional points of damage with unarmed attacks, or 3 points when you are one or more steps down the intoxication track. Enabler.

Liquid Courage: Your defense rolls against fear are eased. They are eased by two steps when you are one or more steps down the intoxication track. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice: Choose either Iron Stomach or Skill With Attacks as your tier 3 ability.

Iron Stomach: The more you imbibe, the greater your tolerance grows (at least, so far. . .). You gain +5 to your Might Pool. Enabler.

Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained, such as unarmed attacks (though you could also select weapon options like light bashing, light bladed, and so on). You are trained in that kind of attack. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of attack. Enabler.

TIER 4

Bottle KO (5+ Might points): You make a melee attack that inflicts no damage. Instead, if the attack hits, make a second Might-based roll. If successful, a foe of level 3 or lower is knocked unconscious for one minute. For each level of Effort used, you can affect one higher level of foe, or you can extend the duration for an additional minute. If you use a whiskey bottle to make the attack, your attack is eased. If you have a similar sort of knockout ability from another source (such as your type), the attack is eased by an additional step. Action.

TIER 5

Learned a Few Things Over Drinks: You are trained in two areas of knowledge of your choice, or specialized in one area of knowledge of your choice. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice: Choose either Inspiration in a Glass or Lethal Damage as your tier 6 ability.

Inspiration in a Glass (6+ Intellect points): You meditate, perhaps over a drink, perhaps on a fond memory you made in a saloon or similar enjoyable location. You gain a level 6 subtle cypher of the general variety that you want (though the GM chooses the specifics) and can use it next round. If you are already at your cypher limit when you use this ability, choose which cypher you replace with the new one. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the cypher's level; each level of Effort used in this way increases the level by 1. Action.

Lethal Damage: Choose one of your existing attacks that deals damage (depending on your type and focus, this might be a specific weapon, your unarmed attacks, or maybe a bottle of whiskey). When you hit with that attack, you inflict an additional 5 points of damage. Enabler.

Hits the Saloon GM intrusions: *The saloon runs out of whiskey. A barfight breaks out. Someone looking to settle a score calls you out.*

RIDES LIKE THE WIND

Few things feel more empowering than when you jump into the saddle and ride! Maybe you have a special mount called Thunder, Caballo, Dusty, or a name you don't share with others. Or perhaps any mount will serve, because you're just that skilled in the saddle. Whatever the case, when you and your mount are moving, other folks say they have a hard time figuring where one of you stops and the other begins—you act as a single creature that almost nothing can stop.

Connection: Choose one of the following, or choose one of the Focus Connections in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

1. Pick one other PC. You promised that character a ride anywhere they wanted to go on your mount. They haven't yet taken you up on your offer.
2. Pick one other PC. You rode them to safety after they got in trouble with the law. Trouble hasn't found you because of it. Yet.
3. Pick one other PC. That character was hired to kill you, but they didn't, because they like your mount.
4. Pick one other PC. Due to a misunderstanding of identity, you rode them down once. They still have a scar, but it's up to them whether they hold it against you.

Additional Equipment: A mount plus riding gear including saddle, bridle, and stirrups.

Mount (horse or similar): *level 3; moves a long distance each round*

Minor Effect Suggestion: You restore 2 points to your Speed Pool or 2 health to your mount.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take a second action this round.

TIER 1

Rider: You are trained in riding any kind of creature that commonly serves as a mount in the setting. Enabler.

Trick Rider: You can make an attack with a light or medium ranged weapon and attempt a riding task as a single action. Riding tasks could be as straightforward as keeping up with a fleeing foe or as tricky as hanging upside down beneath your galloping mount, standing upright on the saddle of your galloping mount, and so on. Enabler.

Tricks attempted from horseback are usually level 3, but training in riding applies.

TIER 2

Supernatural Jump (4 Speed points): You can use this ability in one of two ways. If you're on your mount, you can move a long distance from one location to another almost instantaneously, carried by the creature you ride. You must be able to see the new location, and there must be no intervening barriers.

Alternatively, you can use this ability to summon your mount from wherever it happens to be, leap up into the saddle, and use Trick Rider to make an attack or attempt a riding task. (Your mount can usually reach you even if you are deep underground, high in the air, or in another dimension, because your connection to your mount transcends the natural.)

Action.

TIER 3

Ability Choice: Choose either Enhanced Speed Edge or Nimble in the Saddle as a tier 3 ability. Either way, you also gain Expert Rider as a complementary tier 3 ability.

Enhanced Speed Edge: You gain +1 to your Speed Edge. Enabler.

Expert Rider: You are specialized in all tasks related to riding a mount, including those pertinent to the care and healing of your mount. Enabler.

Nimble in the Saddle: Whether in the saddle or not, you've developed amazing reflexes. You're trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

TIER 4

Gallop Across the Sky (4+ Speed points): Your ride your mount into the air and fly for one minute at a rate of up to a long distance each round. For each level of Effort you apply, you can increase the duration of the effect by one minute or carry one ally of about your size with you that will also fit on your mount. Action to initiate.

TIER 5

○ **Dangerous When Mounted:** When you attack from your saddle, you inflict 3 additional points of damage. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice: Choose either Ride Across the Miles or Tornado Ride as your tier 6 ability.

○ **Ride Across the Miles (6+ Speed points):** You can ride your mount to an open location on the planet that you're familiar with almost instantaneously. If you apply a level of Effort, you can attempt to penetrate covered locations that you're aware of as long as a route exists from the open air to the area you want to reach. Action.

○ **Tornado Rider (7 Speed points):** Your mount's flashing hooves churn up a small tornado, lifting you and your mount a long distance into the eye of the supernatural storm. The tornado moves as you direct it up to a short distance each round for up to five minutes or until you dismiss it. The swirling winds damage creatures, objects, and structures within short range of the tornado's eye. Each round, creatures in the area take 3 points of damage due to debris on the wind. Attempts to damage objects or structures with your tornado are eased by two steps. Action to initiate.

Rides Like the Wind GM intrusions: *Your mount develops a limp. The bridge on the road ahead is out. Your mount throws a shoe. Someone claims your mount is stolen.*

SPITS FIRE AND LEAD

You once crossed paths with a fiery demon, learned a bit of blazecraft from an alchemist, or maybe just always had a special talent for starting fires. That and your love of letting your six-shooters bark combine to make you the feared gunfighter that you are today. You might have developed a reputation already as you move between plains and badlands, using your uncanny skills to avenge, promote justice, or just enrich yourself. Whatever the case, it's how you'll acquit yourself when, inevitably, you draw your burning iron.

Spits Fire and Lead GM intrusions: *Rains douse the flames. The community requires weapons be peace-bonded or confiscated. An ally is shot instead.*

Connection: Choose one of the following, or choose one of the Focus Connections in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

1. Pick one other PC. This character also likes fire. You both deal 1 additional point of damage when you fight the same foe using fire.
2. Pick one other PC. You're certain this character appreciates your smoldering gun and is impressed by how well you shoot. This may or may not actually be the case.
3. Pick one other PC. They quietly think you're either a demon or kin to demons. How they feel about demons is up to them.
4. Pick one other PC. You failed to protect this character at some point in the past, and you feel compelled to make up for your failure.

Additional Equipment: A six-shooter (medium or heavy weapon) and 20 rounds of ammunition.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You graze a target so that their tasks are hindered next round.

Major Effect Suggestion: The target ignites, taking 2 points of damage from fire each round for three rounds (or until they or an ally use an action to douse the flame).

> "When you have to shoot, shoot—don't talk."
>
> —*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966 film)

TIER 1 TYPE SWAP

If you wish, you can swap one or two abilities gained from your type for one or two of the following. Ask your GM what reloading rules are like for pistols before choosing Reload.

○ **Cogent Shot:** You can spend points from either your Speed Pool or your Intellect Pool to apply Effort to hit a target with a gun or increase the damage inflicted doing so. Enabler.

○ **Reload (1 Speed point):** When using a weapon that normally requires an action to reload, you can reload and fire (or fire and reload) in the same action. Enabler.

TIER 1

○ **Smoldering Gun (1 Intellect point):** Your gun blazes with flame for ten minutes, glowing red and discharging a tendril of smoke from the barrel. The flames don't burn you, but you inflict 1 additional point of damage with the gun while it burns. While the gun burns, it automatically flares when anyone tries to touch you or strike you with a melee attack, dealing 2 points of damage to them. Flames from another source can still hurt you. While your gun smolders, you gain +1 Armor against damage from fire from another source.

Alternate Energy: If you'd prefer another element or energy source, such as ice or necrotic energy, work with your GM to adjust this and related abilities.

Enabler.

○ **Practiced With Guns:** You are practiced with guns and suffer no penalty when using one. Enabler.

TIER 2

○ **Summon Gun (3 Intellect points):** If you're ever without your six-shooter, you can summon it (or another just like it) instantly to your hand, already loaded. Enabler.

TIER 3

Ability Choice: Choose either Meticulous Aim or Quickdraw as your tier 3 ability.

Meticulous Aim: If you spend an action lining up your shot while Smoldering Gun is active, each level of Effort adds 5 points of damage to a successful attack instead of 3. Enabler.

Quickdraw: If you act first and your firearm is holstered, you can draw and fire your weapon so blindingly fast that you gain a surprise action against your foe, even if your foe was already aware of your presence (but not if combat has already begun). This doesn't allow your allies to act with surprise, only you. You have an asset on the attack. On a successful hit, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

TIER 4

Blazing Bullets (1+ Intellect points): While Smoldering Gun is active, you inflict an additional 3 points of damage with your chosen weapon (+4 points of damage total). In addition to the normal options for using Effort, applying a level of Effort can cause the bullet to explode on impact, potentially dealing damage to all creatures in immediate range of your target; roll an attack for each separately. Even if you miss, you still deal 1 point of damage with fiery lead shrapnel. Enabler.

TIER 5

Forgeborn Bullet (5 Intellect points): Your fired bullet blooms into a fiery forgeborn with a somewhat humanoid appearance that does your bidding for up to ten minutes. (You can't summon a forgeborn and attack with the same bullet.) After its task is complete, you dismiss the fiery forgeborn as part of another action, or if it is destroyed, it implodes back into a smoldering bullet. Action to initiate.

TIER 6

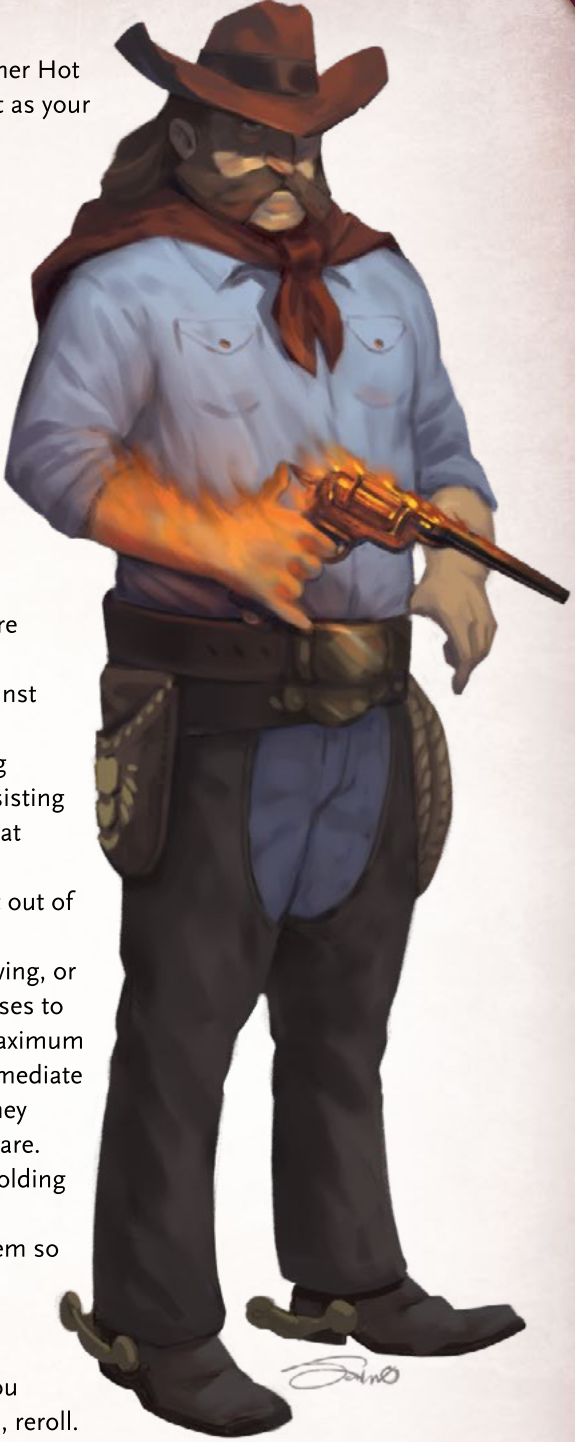
Ability Choice: Choose either Hot Shot or Never Miss a Shot as your tier 6 ability.

Hot Shot: When you hit a target with a gun attack while Smoldering Gun is active, you can choose to reduce the damage by 1 point but gain an additional related effect and/or hit a target in a precise spot. Possible effects include (but are not limited to) the following:

- You can ignite a structure (if you succeed on an Intellect-based task against its level).
- You can create a flaming message in the sky consisting of a handful of words that lasts for up to a minute.
- You can shoot an object out of someone's hand.
- You can shoot the leg, wing, or other limb your target uses to move, reducing their maximum movement speed to immediate for a few days or until they receive expert medical care.
- You can shoot a strap holding a backpack, armor, or a similarly strapped-on item so that it falls off.

Enabler.

Never Miss a Shot: If you shoot at a target and miss, reroll. If you hit, it's because your shot ricochets off a nearby surface and actually hits, inflicting 2 fewer points of damage. Each time you reroll the same shot, 2 more points are deducted from the total damage, until the wildly ricocheting shot finally hits its target or the damage amount goes to 0. Enabler.



Fiery forgeborn: *level 4; anyone who tries to touch or strike the forgeborn with a melee attack automatically takes 1 fire damage*

STRIKES LIKE A RATTLER

Your body is a venomous weapon able to cripple and kill. Watchful as a coiled rattlesnake, you're ready to evade an attacker, then strike back with fists, elbows, knees, or feet that sink into flesh with the speed of fangs. Fact is, you've got a supernatural connection to venomous serpents, the rattler in particular. That spiritual fusion empowers you both offensively and defensively, maybe even eventually giving you power over snakes, or allowing you to become a serpent avatar after shedding your skin.

Strikes Like a Rattler GM intrusions: *Moving quickly into new terrain reveals unexpected potholes. Even hardened fists or other extremities used in an attack can take damage if a strike lands wrong.*

Connection: Choose one of the following, or choose one of the Focus Connections in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

1. Pick one other PC. You rescued this character from a bad situation, but in doing so, you killed someone close to the character. Maybe that was also the PC's persecutor, but there's still some tension between you.
2. Pick one other PC. You were once given a package to deliver to them from a mysterious source, but you lost the package before you were able to hand it over.
3. Pick one other PC. You accidently envenomated them when they shook you awake or otherwise startled you. How they feel about that now is up to them.
4. Pick one other PC. They owe you a significant amount of money.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You make yourself a target, easing your allies' defense rolls until your next turn.

Major Effect Suggestion: You get a second wind and can make an immediate recovery roll that doesn't count against your regular number of recovery rolls today.

TIER 1 TYPE SWAP

If you wish, you can swap an ability gained from your type for the following.

Swift Slither (1+ Speed points): You can move a short distance as part of another action. You can move a long distance as your entire action for a turn. If you apply a level of Effort to this ability, you can move a long distance and make an attack as your entire action for a turn, but the attack is hindered. Enabler.

TIER 1

Venomous Strike (1+ Speed points): For ten minutes, your unarmed attacks inflict 1 additional point of damage (ignores Armor) from venom. Enabler.

Scaled (1+ Speed points): For one hour, your skin grows subtle, supple scales in vulnerable places, granting you +1 to Armor if you do not wear physical armor. Action to initiate.

TIER 2

Unarmed Fighting Style: You are trained in unarmed attacks, assuming you're not already (because this ability provides no benefit if you are). Enabler.

Snake Charmer (1+ Intellect points): You calm an ophidian creature within short range. You must speak to it (though it doesn't need to understand your words), and it must see you. It remains calm for one minute or for as long as you focus all your attention on it. The GM has final say over what counts as a snakelike creature, but unless some kind of deception is at work, you should know whether you can affect it before you attempt to use this ability on it. If you spend 1 additional Intellect point when you use this ability, you can calm all nonhuman beasts, as the GM determines (aliens, demons, animals that can speak, and forgeborn never count). Action.

TIER 3

Ability Choice: Choose either Gain Rattler Companion or Stupefying Rattle as your tier 3 ability.

Gain Rattler Companion: You gain a supernatural rattlesnake—a dust diamondback—as a constant companion. It is over 10 feet (3 m) long and follows your psychic commands. You'll probably make rolls for it in combat or when it takes actions (or it can ease your attacks or your defenses in combat). The companion acts on your turn. If your companion dies, you can hunt in the badlands for a few days to find a new one. Enabler.

Dust diamondback: *level 3, Speed defense as level 4; health 12; bite deals 3 damage plus 1 Speed damage (ignores Armor) on a failed Might defense roll*

Stupefying Rattle (4 Speed points): With a slithering flourish and a ghost rattle echoing from some otherworldly source, you redirect a melee attack that would otherwise hit you if you succeed on a difficulty 2 Speed task. When you do, the misdirected attack hits another creature you choose within immediate range of both you and the attacking foe. Enabler.

TIER 4

Warmed by the Sun (2 Intellect points): After spending ten minutes in the sun, a hot spring, or other such warm location, you gain a free ten-minute recovery roll. Once you use this ability, you can't use it again until after your next ten-hour recovery roll. Ten minutes to activate.

TIER 5

Venom in Their Blood (5 Speed points): If you successfully attack a creature that you previously damaged with Venomous Strike, you deal 9 additional points of damage. Once you use this ability, you can't use it again during the current conflict. Enabler.

TIER 6

Ability Choice: Choose either Shed Skin or Spray Venom as your tier 6 ability.

Shed Skin (7+ Speed points): You shed your normal likeness, revealing a terrifying 30-foot (9 m) long rattlesnake. For one minute, your abilities change as follows: You add 8 points to your Speed Pool, 1 point to your Speed Edge, 2 points to your Intellect Pool, and 1 point to your Intellect Edge; and you gain the "air gliding" ability (you can fly a long distance each round).

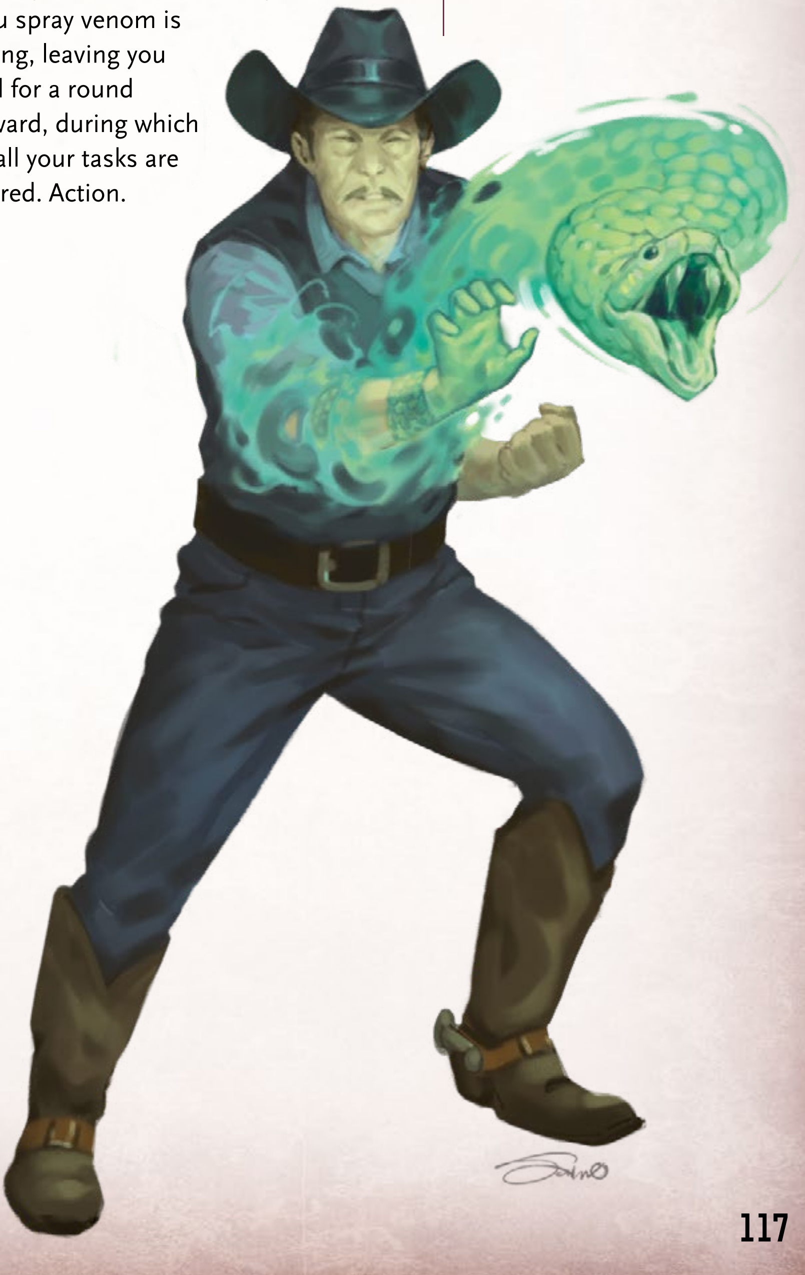
After reverting to your normal form, you lose the benefit of air gliding, your Edge values return to normal, and you must subtract the same number of points you gained in your Pools (if this brings a Pool to 0, subtract the overflow first from your Might Pool, then your Speed Pool, and then, if necessary, from your Intellect Pool).

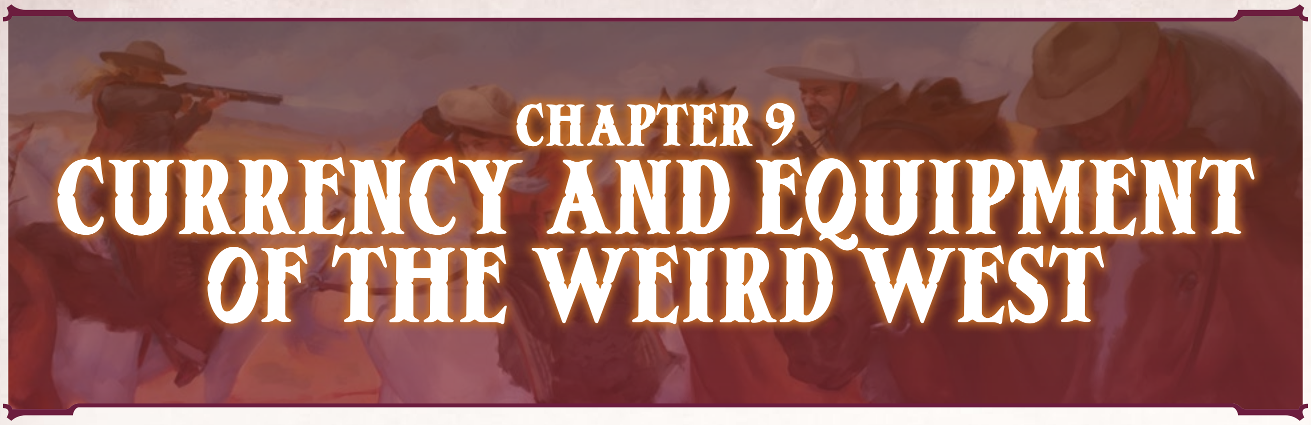
While the ability was active, if you did not deal damage with Venomous Strike, your rolls are hindered by two steps until after your next ten-hour recovery roll. Each additional time you use Shed Skin before your next ten-hour recovery roll, you must apply an additional level of Effort.

Action to initiate.

Spray Venom (5+ Speed points): You hiss and release a spray of burning, flesh-dissolving venom at one target within short range, inflicting 5 points of damage. Even on a miss, you inflict 1 point of damage.

If you apply a level of Effort when you make an attack with this ability (either to increase the odds of hitting or to increase damage), you can also choose to spin about as you spray venom, attacking every creature you choose within short range, and the improved chance to hit or deal damage applies to each attack. As with the base use, even on a miss, you inflict 1 point of damage. However, spinning as you spray venom is dizzying, leaving you dazed for a round afterward, during which time all your tasks are hindered. Action.





CHAPTER 9

CURRENCY AND EQUIPMENT OF THE WEIRD WEST

Only fools venture out into the badlands without proper equipment.

CURRENCY

All kinds of currencies could be used simultaneously in your weird west game on account of the scarcity of officially issued coins and paper money. Here are some options for your consideration.

DOLLARS

In a weird west world inspired by real world history, you might decide to adopt the dollar. Dollars are mostly circulated as coins of various denominations. Paper money is also printed, though not as widely circulated.

Stardust and Dustfalls, page 147

Price Categories, page 202

The *Cypher System Rulebook* uses price categories as an abstract way of defining equipment prices. If you want to use dollars instead of categories in the CSR, use the following equivalencies as a rough guideline. As you'll note, dollars go a lot further in a weird west (and historical) setting than in a modern game.

Category	Dollar Value
Inexpensive	Up to $1
Moderate	$1–$10
Expensive	$100–$500
Very expensive	$1,000–$10,000
Exorbitant	$10,000+

Equipment, page 120

For items between these dollar ranges, use multiples of the cheaper category, or require multiples to count as the pricier category. For example, a service worth $50 is between the moderate and expensive categories, so it's worth a few moderate items, or two services like it are worth one expensive item.

GOLD DUST AND NUGGETS

Gold could be a highly valued currency in your setting, though if you're looking for something weirder, use stardust instead (or in addition). Pouches or vials of gold dust weighing no more than half an ounce (14 g) are equal to an inexpensive item, bags of gold dust weighing no more than 5 ounces (140 g) are equal to a moderately priced item, and so on. Even if not recognized as official currency, small pouches of gold dust could be used for barter.

BARTER

In especially remote regions, folks tend to trade goods and services directly with each other, even when other currency is also accepted. Equating all the ways someone might barter—in which haggling is expected—directly to price categories is an approximate art.

You can use the equipment list price categories to help you decide how much something is worth when bartered for. For example, the equipment list reveals that both a candle and a simple meal are inexpensive items, meaning one could be bartered for the other.

AMMUNITION

If nothing else, ammunition is valuable. It could even be one form of trade used in your weird west game. If so, fussing about what bullet can be used in what kind of gun isn't as important as it being clear that ammunition is unfired and potentially live.

Use the following guidelines to equate price categories to rounds of ammunition.

Price Category	Rounds of Ammo
Inexpensive	~1–5 bullets
Moderate	100 bullets
Expensive	5,000 bullets
Very expensive	10,000 bullets
Exorbitant	50,000 bullets

SCRIP AND PRIVATE TOKENS

Your weird west setting might include one or more vouchers or tokens issued by organized groups like railroad companies, banks, and even individual saloons to pay those they do business with. Such scrip may or may not have value outside the area where it was issued, depending on your setting.

For example, the Trail's End Cantina, a local saloon in Midnight, offers smoothed coins (larger legal coins cut into quarters), each stamped with a horseshoe symbol. These are given to high rollers at the saloon's card tables. These so-called "irons" get passed around, are bought and sold, and are generally considered to be worth a moderately priced item in the community, and an inexpensive item elsewhere.

Other notes and documents that retain value almost anywhere include land deeds (especially if they're transferrable) and stock certificates. However, stock certificates may not be appropriate to your setting if there isn't a "national" stock market where shares are bought and sold.

STARDUST AS CURRENCY

In The Ghost Range setting, stardust is a rare sorcerous resource that appears during certain "high magic" periods (called dustfalls), usually falling from the sky in specific locations on cloudless nights. If not gathered before daylight, it melts away like dew. But if collected and stored away from direct sun, the material can be used for a variety of uncanny purposes, many of them alchemical.

The Ghost Range, page 144

Like gold dust, stardust can also be used to pay for other goods and services. Small pouches or vials of stardust weighing no more than half an ounce (14 g) are equal to a moderately priced item, small bags of stardust weighing no more than 5 ounces (140 g) are equal to an expensive item, saddlebags weighing no more than 3 lbs. (1.3 kg) are equal to a very expensive item, and so on.

Inhaling Stardust: Alternatively, the stuff can simply be inhaled into the nasal passage like dry snuff. Inhaling a pinch (a half ounce, equal to a moderately priced item) gives the user a bit of a high for ten minutes, but makes a character move a bit slower. (Mechanically, a PC gains 1 point to their Intellect Pool but loses 1 point from their Speed Pool; NPCs split the difference and gain no mechanical benefit or downside.)

Trail's End Cantina, page 160

Direct interaction with stardust may have other effects, but it'd take an alchemist to know for sure.

Other Stardust Uses, page 147

ADDITIONAL WEIRD WEST EQUIPMENT

Many weird west games assume a technological level equivalent to the American West in the 1800s, with the possibility of magical and/or steampunk artifacts thrown into the mix. This assumption holds for the equipment list provided here. PCs can use it to choose their starting equipment, or browse when they enter a general store.

Sci-Fi? However, your weird west campaign might take place in the future or on another planet settled via spaceflight, which could include a combination of the items in this chapter plus some items from the Additional Science Fiction Equipment list.

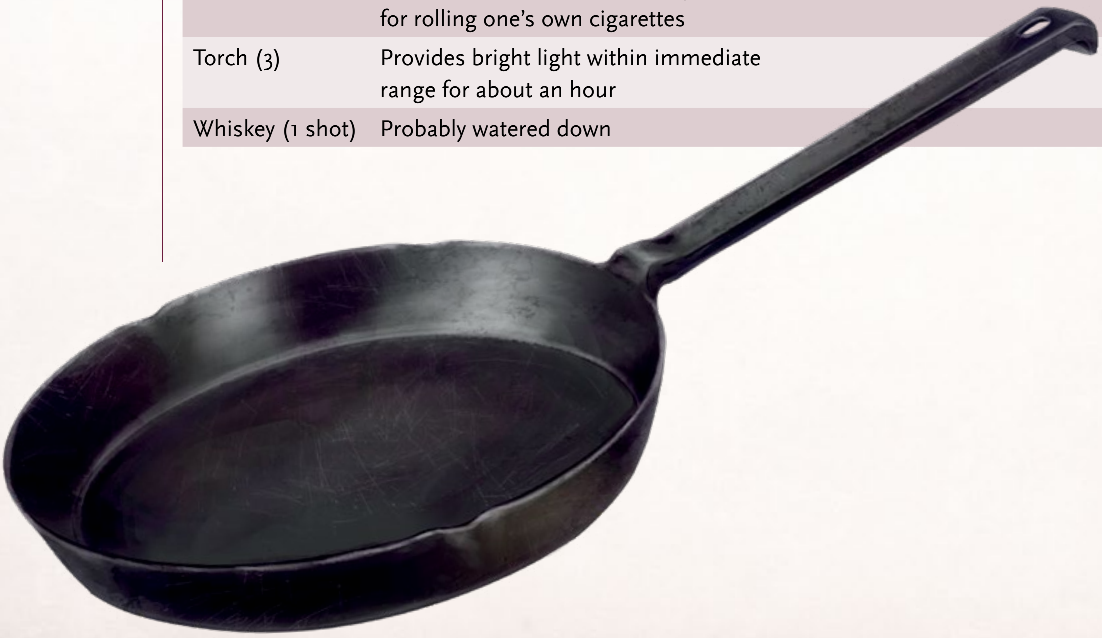
Additional Science Fiction Equipment, page 272

INEXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Arrows	About 12 arrows
Bullets	About 5 bullets
Knife	Light weapon; liable to break (depletion: 1 in d10)
Horseshoe	Light weapon, short range when thrown

Other Items	Notes
Burlap sack	
Calico fabric	A few yards of fabric useful for repairing clothing and other items
Candle	
Cast-iron skillet	Ideal for cooking food over a campfire
Deck of cards	52-card deck made of simple cardstock
Jerky	Enough to feed a person for one day
Kerosene, 1 pint	
Simple meal	Bowl of stew and a crust of bread or similar
Snuff, 1 pouch	Finely ground tobacco that can be inhaled; another version that is partially fermented can be pinched between lip and gums
Tobacco, loose	Comes with 10 sheets of rolling paper for rolling one's own cigarettes
Torch (3)	Provides bright light within immediate range for about an hour
Whiskey (1 shot)	Probably watered down

Pemmican might also be available, which is a concentrated mixture of dried meat, rendered fat, and sometimes berries made by some Native Nations.



MODERATELY PRICED ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Box of ammo	100 bullets
Hand axe	Light weapon
Knife	Light weapon; with guard and hilt; called a “bowie” knife in some settings
Dynamite (1 stick)	Level 4; inflicts damage in immediate area; automatic depletion; GM intrusion range 1–3 on a d20 when used in combat or similar circumstances

Armor	Notes
Animal hide	Light armor; tanned and stitched
Leather duster	Light armor

Other Items	Notes
Bandolier	Also called a cartridge belt; leather belt or strap providing quick bullet access
Bedroll	
Boots	Designed for both riding and walking
Box of nails	6–20 nails; various grades, from those meant for horseshoes to spikes used to secure rail trusses
Camp cookware	A few cast-iron pots and pans, kettle, dishes, stirring spoon
Cigars	Box of 5
Coffee beans, bag	Can be crushed and used to make coffee in a kettle
Canteen	Enough water for one person for one day
Deck of cards, deluxe	52-card deck made of thicker cardstock with custom illustrations
Gun belt, deluxe	Includes holster (basic versions come standard with most purchased pistols)
Harmonica	
Lantern	Provides bright light in a short area; includes pint of kerosine
Matches, box	About 50 matches, strike to light
Riding gear, used	Saddle, bridle, blanket, stirrups, and other bits to make riding a mount easier
Saddlebag	Can also be used like a backpack
Wide-brimmed hat	Popular hat worn by gunslingers and marshals
Rope	Hemp, 50 feet
Sewing kit	Comes with half a dozen needles, a thimble, and a couple spools of thread
Tent	Sleeps two
Tool set	Includes small hammer, pliers, chisel, small handsaw
Whiskey (1 bottle)	Determined drinking could put users on the intoxication track

These “classic cowboy hats” include the popular Stetson brand in the modern-day.

Intoxication Track, page 66

EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Alchemical round	Limited availability, purchased rounds level 4 or lower
Bow	Medium weapon, long range
Cutlass	Medium weapon
Pistol, light	Light weapon, short range, single shot ("pocket pistol")
Revolver, medium	Medium weapon, long range, 6-shot ("six-shooter")
Rifle, breech-loading	Medium weapon, long range, 6-shot
Shotgun*	Heavy weapon, immediate range, single shot

**Although it is an immediate-range weapon, extreme range for a shotgun extends out to short range (instead of just at the limit of immediate range).*

Extreme range, page 220

Other Items	Notes
Alchemist's tools	Not very mobile; includes mortar and pestle, crucible, retort, tongs, etc.
Blacksmith's tools	Not very mobile; includes anvil, hammer, tongs, forge, etc.
Farrier's tools	Hoof nippers, hoof knife, hoof rasp, pullers, nails, hammer, etc.

VERY EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Revolver, heavy	Heavy weapon, long range, 6-shot ("six-shooter")

Other Items	Notes
Horse	Trained for riding or carriage hauling
Coach/carriage	Requires at least a couple of horses to haul the coach

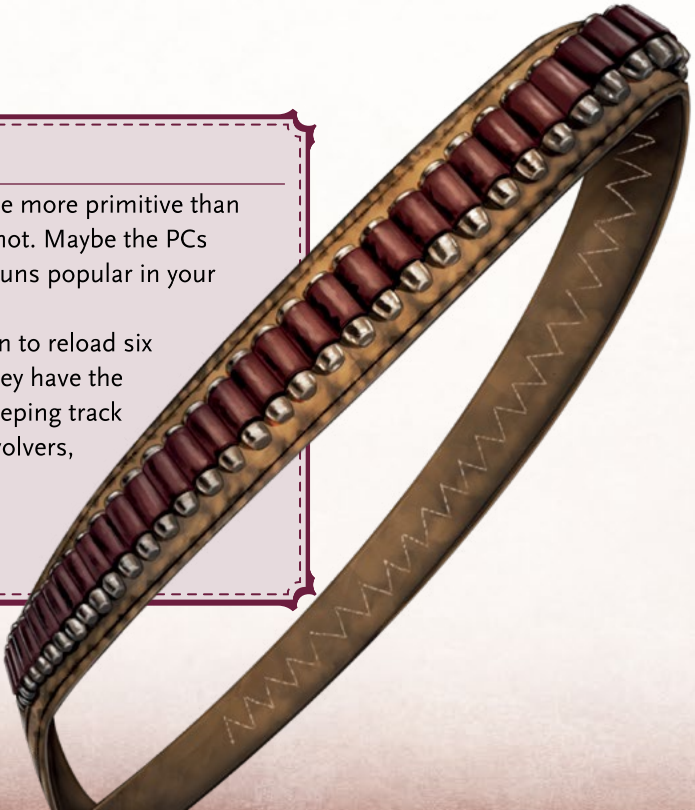
EXORBITANT ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Gatling gun	Heavy weapon, rapid-fire, long range, mounted on large-wheeled carriage; enough ammunition to fire the gun for 1 minute is a very expensive cost

RELOADING GUNS IN THE WEIRD WEST

Six-shooters and other firearms in your setting might be more primitive than modern firearms and require extra time to reload—or not. Maybe the PCs are just that good, in which case, revolvers and other guns popular in your setting can be reloaded as part of another action.

Alternatively, you could require that PCs use an action to reload six bullets into the chamber of the shootin' iron (unless they have the Reload ability). If you don't want to burden PCs with keeping track of how many bullets remain in the cylinders of their revolvers, an easy way to determine if a character's six-shooter is empty after any given turn is to use depletion; a typical six-shooter has a depletion of 1 in 1d6.



Reload, page 114

CHAPTER 10

CYPHERS AND ARTIFACTS OF THE WEIRD WEST

The cyphers and artifacts available in your setting can vary widely, depending on setting specifics.

WEIRD WEST CYPHERS

Your setting may rely exclusively on subtle cyphers, manifest cyphers, or a mix of both.

SUBTLE CYPHERS

Subtle cyphers are appropriate as an adjunct to weird west games that have at least a passing similarity to historical reality.

That said, weird west games—with their connection to magic and/or sci-fi technology—have a lot of room to include thematically appropriate manifest cyphers (as shown by the examples provided later in this chapter). If you include manifest cyphers, remember that the Cypher System rules assume players have regular opportunities to regain cyphers after using the ones they have. Out in the badlands, deserts, or prairielands where weird west adventurers often find themselves, manifest cyphers might be harder to obtain. Letting subtle cyphers fill in the gaps during periods when PCs don't find any manifest ones is a good idea.

For example, if alchemists are common in your setting, their works might be found here and there in the game—but perhaps not so often (or cheaply enough) that characters can easily refill to their cypher limit after using what they already have. Though of course, there's nothing wrong with the PCs finding a long-dead gunslinger or prospector's corpse with a couple of manifest cyphers on it.

Subtle cyphers are a great backstop, and can be used as described in the *Cypher System Rulebook*.

POWER WORD SUBTLE CYPHERS

In The Ghost Range, complex and utterly inhuman memes seep into the world and worm their way in and out of human consciousness. When this happens, mental distress and disorientation are common, but those with the mental fortitude can grab onto them before they slip away. They've come to be called "power words" by some. By all accounts, each word is a fragment of an inhumanly powerful language of creation used at the dawn of time by the Ilu.

The Ghost Range, page 144

Ilu, page 149

Subtle Cyphers, page 378

Manifest Cyphers, page 379

DISCOVERING POWER WORD SUBTLE CYPHERS

Whenever PCs in your game could discover a subtle cypher, consider giving someone in the group a power word subtle cypher. (A power word subtle cypher is usually transmitted by a specially crafted piece of text that fades once it's read and the cypher takes up residence in someone's mind; other times, one just occurs to a PC visiting a strange place.) No more than one PC in the group should have a power word subtle cypher at any given time. Once they use it, you can give another PC in the group one, preferably something different.

When a character does gain a power word subtle cypher, they immediately need to make an Intellect defense roll. On a failed roll, they are briefly stunned by the alien nature of the unknown series of syllables resonating through their mind, causing the character to lose their next turn. They remain stunned until they succeed on an Intellect defense roll on a subsequent round, representing gaining control over and mentally "caging" the word.

USING A POWER WORD SUBTLE CYPHER

Speak Aloud: Unlike regular subtle cyphers, a power word must be spoken aloud (if only whispered). To human ears and minds, the sound is an uncanny concatenation of vowels, glottal stops, and consonants. (For ease of use, the most direct translation is given for each power word subtle cypher presented here.)

NPCs could also gain increased effects from using power word subtle cyphers. One way to emulate Effort use by an NPC with a power word is to allow them to apply a number of levels of Effort equal to half their level (round down).

Applying Effort: A power word relies on the willpower of the speaker. This gives PCs a leg up on NPCs using power words, because a PC can apply Effort, as follows:

- Apply levels of Effort to increase the cypher's base level, ease the chance of success, and/or increase damage potential if the cypher is offensive. (Some tables already play so that you can use Effort in this fashion with normal cyphers, but lots don't.)
- Ignore the normal Effort limit for a character's given tier. Overdoing the amount of Effort normally allowed is potentially its own consequence due to its weakening effect, but also due to Drawing Attention. Of course, a character with a power word cypher isn't required to apply Effort; they can just use the subtle cypher normally.

Nihilal, page 150

Transcribing Power Words: A character can try to "trap" a power word by transcribing it on paper or a solid surface. Doing so is a minute-long process and requires having something to write with and succeeding on an Intellect task equal to the power word's level. On a success, the character no longer has the power word, but instead has a document (or immobile surface, if transcribed on a wall or floor) from which the power word could be relearned by someone else (such as an alchemist who will pay an expensive amount or more for it).

Awful thing: *level 5; health 18; attacks with toothed tentacles; where damaged, target's skin is discolored for several weeks*

MANY POTENTIAL POWER WORDS

In addition to those introduced here, many additional power words are possible. Effectively, any manifest cypher in the *Cypher System Rulebook* could be adapted to become a power word.

For example, the desiccating detonation could be a power word, and the word is probably "desiccate" or "dry." Speaking the word causes an effect up to a long distance away that drains moisture from everything in an immediate range, dealing damage equal to the cypher's level (or potentially more, if the user expends Effort).

DRAWING ATTENTION

The reason the Ilu are gone and why there are proscribed zones created by Native Nations is something alchemists and others are still seeking to figure out in The Ghost Range setting. However, it's clear that the Ilu were somehow involved with confining horrific things associated with entities called the Nihilal, things that sometimes get loose in the present.

Attention is potentially drawn whenever a character uses a power word subtle cypher or artifact fashioned by the Ilu or Nihilal. It is actually drawn if any of the following occurs.

- The GM intrudes.
- The PC rolls a 1 (or within a failure range if the automatic intrusion range has been extended).
- When a character attempts to understand an Ilu or Nihilal artifact with an Intellect roll and fails.
- When a character first gains a new power word subtle cypher and fails an Intellect roll to understand how to use it.
- When a PC attempts to transcribe a power word subtle cypher and fails.

In such a case, something like an awful thing seeps up out of the earth and attacks. The thing is a horrifying mass of writhing, slapping, undulating tentacles twice the size of a person.

POWER WORD SUBTLE CYPHERS

d20	Cypher
1	Power Word: Break
2	Power Word: Cloak
3	Power Word: Crawl
4	Power Word: Door
5	Power Word: Draw
6	Power Word: Erase
7	Power Word: Flee
8	Power Word: Fog
9	Power Word: Hang
10	Power Word: Ignite
11	Power Word: Immune
12	Power Word: Obey
13	Power Word: Restore
14	Power Word: Reveal
15	Power Word: Ride
16	Power Word: Shield
17	Power Word: Stalk
18	Power Word: Stop
19	Power Word: Summon
20	Power Word: Worship

POWER WORD: BREAK

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: A discrete object within short range that fits into a 10-foot (3 m) cube whose level is equal to or below that of this cypher breaks in half. If the object is in the possession of another creature, a successful Intellect attack against that creature is required to break the object. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, the power word speaker can increase the effective level of the cypher for each level of Effort they apply. Alternatively, the speaker can cause a fissure/breakage up to 10 feet wide in a larger object if they apply a level of Effort.

POWER WORD: CLOAK

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The speaker or a creature they touch is undetectable to other creatures whose level is less than this cypher's for one hour. They are invisible, but also hidden from senses such as smell, hearing, and even paranormal senses. The cloak disperses if the invisible creature does something to reveal their presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. For each additional level of Effort applied, the cloak can be extended to an additional touched creature.

POWER WORD: CRAWL

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The limbs of a creature within short range fuse together for five minutes per cypher level, during which time they can't move except by crawling, squirming, and/or rolling, and their physical tasks (including attacks and Speed defense rolls) are hindered by two steps.

POWER WORD: DOOR

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: A weathered wooden door appears within immediate range of the speaker, either freestanding or set in a previously solid or blank surface. The door leads to a location the speaker knows (they've been there, they have a picture of it, or they have an important object that belongs in that location) anywhere in the world. The door lasts for one minute, and can be used by the speaker or any other creature during that period to travel in either direction (the other side of the door is visible at the connected location). If a level of Effort is applied, the door is locked to anyone but the speaker and/or those the speaker specifies when they speak this power word cypher.

POWER WORD: DRAW

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: A target within long range draws their ranged weapon and attacks a second target within long range of both the first target and the speaker. The speaker rolls the attack against the second target. If a level of Effort is applied, the target attacks themself, dealing an additional 2 points of damage if the speaker's attack roll succeeds.

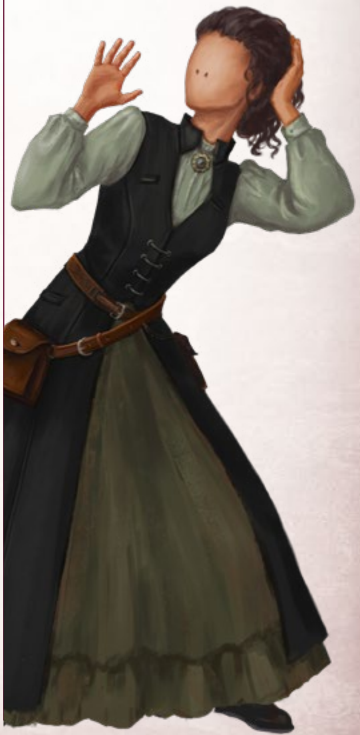
POWER WORD: ERASE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: An object within short range containing writing, symbols, or an image—a wanted poster, a painting, a book, a newspaper, and so on—is rendered blank, completely erased. If the object is special in some way, such as being magical or encoded digitally (a computer's hard drive, for instance), the object must be equal to or less than the cypher's level.

Alternatively, the face of a creature within short range is erased with a successful attack for a number of minutes equal to the cypher level. An affected target is blind and unable to speak, but can still breathe through two orifices where their nose once was (if the target was humanoid).

Due to its elusive nature, Power Word: Forget evaded the Power Word Subtle Cyphers table.



POWER WORD: FOG

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Heavy fog rolls in, filling a very long area for twenty minutes per cypher level. Visibility in the fog is reduced to immediate range. Magical winds and other supernatural effects can clear the fog within small areas, but the fog returns if the level of the clearing effect is less than the cypher's level.

POWER WORD: FLEE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: A number of creatures equal to this cypher's level do nothing but flee (or try to) for the next few rounds if they are affected—an Intellect-based attack is rolled separately against each target the speaker attempts to affect.

POWER WORD: FORGET

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: A target whose level is equal to or less than the cypher's within immediate range forgets their own name, their history, and their current situation with a successful attack roll. Curiously, they can still speak and act normally. The target gradually regains their memories over the next few days.

POWER WORD: HANG

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: If the speaker, an ally, or a target within short range has a length of rope at least 10 feet (3 m) long, the rope animates, looping one end around the neck of a target within short range who is successfully attacked. The other end of the rope jerks into the air, suspending the target a few feet above the ground. A target of level 2 or less is instantly killed when their neck breaks. A higher-level target takes 3 points of damage each round for a minute, or until someone (possibly the target themself, since their hands are not restrained) cuts or breaks the rope (whose level is equal to the cypher's level for the duration of the effect).

POWER WORD: IGNITE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: An object within short range ignites in flame. If the object's level is less than the cypher's, it is destroyed. Either way, it could potentially start a larger fire if nearby objects are flammable.

Alternatively, a creature in short range burns for 2 points of damage each round for a number of rounds equal to this cypher's level if they are successfully attacked.

POWER WORD: IMMUNE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: For one day, the speaker can't be dazed or stunned by physical attacks and they are immune to poisons, diseases, and curses whose level is less than this cypher's. Action.

POWER WORD: OBEY

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: A psychic command is implanted in the mind of a creature within immediate range that the power word is spoken (or whispered) to. The implantation designates an event that will trigger the command that can be summarized in a single, short sentence. The command can linger untriggered for a number of months equal to this cypher's level before fading if not triggered. When the triggering event occurs, the target must carry out the command to the best of their ability. The command can be fairly intricate and require up to 24 hours to complete, but it cannot involve direct harm to the target or anyone important to them. It also cannot be something obviously impossible to the target.

POWER WORD: REVEAL

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: Speaker gains an exceptional awareness of everything within short range for ten minutes per cypher level. During that period, they can see things that are normally invisible whose level is less than this cypher's, including creatures who are merely exceptionally good at hiding and sneaking. They can also see in smoke, in fog, and in darkness as if in bright light. In addition, the speaker's attacks and other tasks that rely on sight are eased.

POWER WORD: RESTORE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: An object within immediate range that was harmed or destroyed within the past number of days equaling the cypher's level is restored, repaired, and so on.

Alternatively, a creature harmed by another power word cypher is also restored in health (or Pool points), as long as they are not dead. If they are dead, the speaker can attempt to restore them to life by succeeding on an Intellect-based roll against a difficulty equal to the number of days the target has been dead (minimum 1, maximum 10).

POWER WORD: RIDE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: A mount appears and is willing to bear the speaker for one day per level of the cypher. The mount is uncanny in some way, possibly a hellfire steed or fleshmare or something else rare chosen by the GM.

Hellfire steed, page 82

Fleshmare, page 84

POWER WORD: SHIELD

Level: 1d6

Effect: For one hour, the speaker or a creature the speaker touches gains a number of points of Armor equal to this cypher's level. The effect is visible as a sort of silvery glow suffusing the skin of the shielded creature.

POWER WORD: STALK

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The speaker chooses a creature within long range as their prey, or the prey of an ally they touch. For the next day per level of the cypher, any task involving finding or following the prey is by two steps for the designated stalker. Successful attacks against the prey by the designated stalker deal 2 additional points of damage.

POWER WORD: STOP

Level: 1d6

Effect: All movement of a creature or object within short range stops for a number of rounds equal to this cypher's level with a successful attack (or a successful Speed defense roll, if being physically attacked). That includes charging mounts, falling bodies, bullets, and more. The sudden stop doesn't cause physical harm (unlike how the ground stopping a falling body normally would). Purely mental actions can still be taken and/or are not interrupted. When the duration expires, affected creatures and objects move normally, but not with the velocity and momentum they may have once had. So stopped bullets just fall to the ground, charging mounts stumble and must build up speed again, and so on.

POWER WORD: SUMMON

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: If the speaker has met a creature or knows a creature's full name (or "true" name), they can summon that creature to them if the summoned creature's level is equal to or less than the cypher's level, no matter where they are. A successful attack roll is required to affect an unwilling target. The summoned creature appears within immediate range of the speaker, and is free to act according to their nature immediately.

POWER WORD: WORSHIP

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: A number of targets equal to the cypher's level within short range fall to their knees and raise their arms in adoration of the user—roll attacks against each target separately. Targets remain worshipful, taking no actions, for about a minute, or until damaged or otherwise shocked out of their adulation.

MANIFEST CYPHERS

Manifest cyphers in a weird west game could be the product of some oddity of your particular setting, such as alien invaders. However, the primary assumption is that manifest weird west cyphers are created by alchemists, sorcerers, demons, and the like.

ALCHEMICAL MANIFEST CYPHERS

Magic is also referred to as "alchemy" or "sorcery" in The Ghost Range, as well as in other worldbuilding sections of this book. Alchemy is usually attributed to alchemists, while sorcery is attributed to demons and/or those who learned their magic from a Hellish source. But sometimes alchemists create items of such dire consequence that demons would be happy to take the credit.

ALIEN MANIFEST CYPHERS

In a weird west setting enduring an ongoing alien invasion, encroaching alien outposts, crashed starfighters, and the rare alien conscientious objector who feels bad about conquering the place could all be sources of uncanny items. Given their off-world manufacture, these manifest cyphers are probably nearly inscrutable, but PCs are able to get a single use out of them, even if it's not the use the aliens had in mind.

In such guise, a variety of manifest cyphers in the *Cypher System Rulebook* could potentially be found and used by PCs, as well as manifest cyphers described in *Numenera Discovery* and *Destiny*.

Manifest Cyphers, page 379

Additional manifest cyphers can be found in Numenera Discovery *and* Numenera Destiny *on page 272 and 180, respectively.*

The most prominent alchemical manifest cyphers are alchemical rounds and slugs—ammunition for pistols, rifles, and shotguns.

A handful of alchemists sell their rounds and slugs to interested buyers for an expensive cost, or very expensive for level 5 and higher alchemical rounds and slugs.

Expensive item, page 202

Alchemical rounds operate using a few special rules, as follow.

Form of Alchemical Rounds: Alchemical rounds—such as a banishing round or an asphyxiation round—are alchemical manifest cyphers in the form of bullets or shells that visibly glow in dim light. The alchemist who made a given bullet or shell usually inscribes it with their mark—a symbol, their initials, and so on.

Loading Alchemical Rounds: Alchemical rounds use whatever reloading rules are in use in the setting.

Reloading Guns in the Weird West, page 122

So, if the reloading rules are such that reloading—when a gunfighter pulls the bullet from a bandolier or cartridge belt and slips it into the chamber—is part of another action, a gunfighter with an alchemical round available may simply declare any given shot they attempt is using that round.

Otherwise, it takes an action to load an alchemical round into the chamber. However, the continuing effect an alchemical round confers lessens the sting of the action spent reloading.

Continuing Effect of Alchemical Round Attacks: When an alchemical round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made with that gun gain the same benefit for the next minute (as indicated in each alchemical round entry). For example, if a character fires a banishing round, every attack they make with the same gun for the next minute is also considered a banishing round, regardless of whether the first attack hits or misses.

Some alchemical bullets do not infuse the gun they're fired from, as indicated by name—they're referred to as slugs instead of rounds—and in the description. For example, dark slugs and thunder slugs do not infuse the gun, but instead create a lasting effect in an adjacent area.

If a second alchemical round is fired from the same gun while an earlier infusion effect remains active, refer to the Alchemical Round Fusion Effect table.

Alchemical Round Fusion Effect, page 136

ALCHEMICAL ROUNDS AND SLUGS

doo	Cypher
01–03	Answering slug
04–06	Asphyxiation round
07–10	Banishing round
11–13	Dark slug
14–16	Entombing round
17–20	Exorcism round
21–23	Exsanguinating round
24–26	Flaying round
27–30	Ghost round
31–33	Glacier round
34–36	Gunlantern slug
37–40	Haunted slug
41–43	Heavenly fire round
44–46	Hellfire slug
47–56	Hexing round
57–60	Impervious slug
61–63	Inebriating round
64–66	Interrogation round
67–70	Necrotic round
71–72	Otherwhere slug
73–74	Possessing round
75–76	Sobering round
77–80	Soul-killing round
81–83	Sympathy slug
84–86	Thunder slug
87–90	Unraveling round
91–93	Wanted slug
94–96	Washing round
97–00	Watcher slug

ANSWERING SLUG

Level: 1d6

Form: "RETORT" scribed on bullet case

Effect: A successful attack with an answering slug damages a target normally. In addition, for the next minute, any time another creature attacks the shooter with a ranged attack, the shooter can make an immediate extra attack against that creature using the same gun, ignoring reloading restrictions (if any apply). While the effect lasts, the shooter can make a number of additional immediate "answering" attacks equal to the cypher's level (in addition to making their normal attack for the round).

ASPHYXIATION ROUND

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Blowing wind image scribed on bullet case

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. A successful attack damages a target normally. If the damaged target is a living creature that needs to breathe, the target becomes short of breath, hindering all their tasks for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level. If the same target is struck and damaged again within that minute with another asphyxiation round, they are stunned as air is alchemically forced from their lungs and blood. Unless at least one asphyxiation round stuck in their flesh is removed from a stunned target's flesh with a successful level 4 healing task, the stunned target asphyxiates and dies at the end of the minute the target first became short of breath.

BANISHING ROUND

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: "EXCLUDE LIFE" scribed on bullet case

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. Undead, ghosts, cursed beasts, and other supernatural targets take full damage from this attack (if successful). Affected targets gain no benefit from Armor, intangibility, or other protection, and lose any automatic healing ability for a number of minutes equal to this cypher's level. Normal targets with protective alchemical spells similarly lose that protection. If the cypher's level is 6 or higher, successful attacks deal +1 point of damage.

Wooden casket: *level equal to entombing round cypher; dissolves at midnight*

> **"You better put down that gun. You got two ways to go, put it down or use it. Even if you tie me, you're gonna be dead."**
>
> **—*Hombre* (1967 film)**

DARK SLUG

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Round is dark as the night sky

Effect: Firing the slug creates a region of absolute darkness from which no sound emerges. The region fills an adjacent short area (or long area if the cypher is level 5 or higher) and lasts for about a minute.

Any creature whose level is less than the cypher's that enters (or begins their turn in) the area can see nothing (even if they can normally see in darkness), and any light source of lower level than the cypher's that is brought into or begins a turn in the darkness is deactivated. While the cypher is in effect, successfully escaping the darkness is hindered by four steps.

ENTOMBING ROUND

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Coffin image scribed on bullet case

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. A successful attack with an entombing round doesn't damage the target; instead, a target up to human size is held in place, still able to take actions but unable to move or leave the spot for one minute or until they escape with a successful Might-based roll. (NPCs whose level is higher than the round's break free if they spend their next turn escaping.)

If the same target is hit again with an entombing round while still held immobile, they are enveloped in an expanding mass that takes the shape of a closed, secured wooden casket whose level is equal to the round's level. A third successful attack against an affected target causes the casket to sink 6 feet (2 m) into the earth, buried beneath a pile of loose soil.

A trapped target is held within the casket until the gunfighter releases them, the casket is destroyed, the target breaks free, or midnight arrives, at which time the casket dissolves to dust. If the target's casket is buried when their casket dissolves, they have until their breath expires (a minute or so) to dig their way to the surface (a level 5 task) or remain buried.

EXORCISM ROUND

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Broken horn image scribed on bullet case

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. A successful attack with an exorcism round damages a target normally. In addition, ghosts and demons (whether immaterial or wearing someone else's flesh)—as well as other creatures strongly tied to an alternate realm—hit by this attack are exorcised if their level is less than or equal to the cypher's level. An exorcised creature disappears and is unable to remanifest physically in the same area or realm for at least one day.

This attack is potentially as effective against a target being possessed by a ghost or demon, ending the possession, though the host is also damaged by the bullet.

EXSANGUINATING ROUND

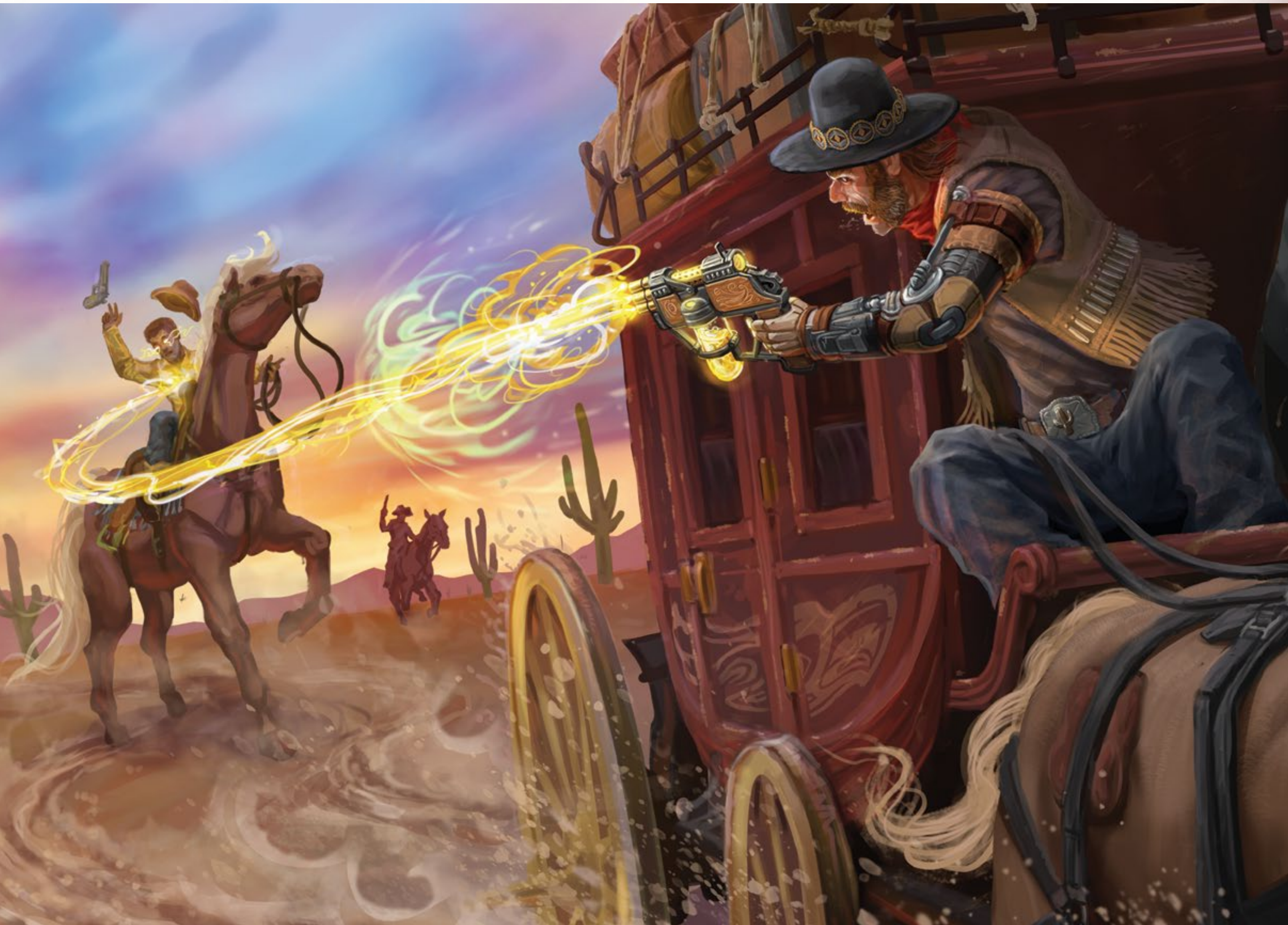
Level: 1d6 +1

Form: Red blood smears bullet case

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. The target takes damage normally. If the target is living and has blood, it begins bleeding for 1 point of damage per round for one minute. Additional successful attacks increase the damage on a one-per-one-basis, and extend the period of effect.

The expelled blood forms a mystical rivulet that connects the shooter with the bleeding target. If the target dies, the shooter gains an immediate free recovery roll (or regains 10 health if an NPC).

If the shooter who fired the round is a vampire and their bleeding target is killed, the vampire is completely healed and gains the benefit of having just drank a victim's blood to their fill.



FLAYING ROUND

Level: 1d6

Form: Bullet case seems made of skin

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. A successful attack damages a target normally. The target's skin/fur/outer layer begins to peel away as if they'd gained the attention of an invisible flensing blade, hindering their tasks for one minute per cypher level. The second time a target is struck and damaged with a flaying round within a minute of first being struck, larger sections of skin peel away, hindering them by two steps. Each three steps of hindrance gained also moves the target one step down the damage track.

GHOST ROUND

Level: 1d6

Form: Round appears ghostly, translucent, not quite real

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. Unliving targets (undead, forgeborn, elementals, objects, etc.) take damage normally from a ghost round attack, or normal damage +2 if the cypher is level 5 or higher. However, the ghost round ignores living flesh, passing through it like . . . a ghost.

GLACIER SLUG

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Bullet case seems made of ice

Effect: A successful attack deals damage equal to the cypher's level and freezes the target (rendering them helpless) for a number of minutes equal to the cypher's level. A PC who succeeds on a Might-based roll as their action can thaw early (an affected NPC whose level is higher than the cypher's can use their next turn to break free). On a miss, the target still takes 2 points of damage from the cold (3 points if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

GUNLANTERN SLUG

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Bullet case glows dim as a candle

Effect: Firing the slug (either as an attack or into the air) causes the gun to emit a beam of light for three hours per cypher level. The beam brightly illuminates an immediate area the gun wielder points their gun at within long range.

If the wielder points their light into a region of magical darkness, and the effect that created the darkness is of lower level than the gunlantern slug, the darkness is dispelled. If the magical darkness is higher level, the duration of the illumination effect ends.

HAUNTED SLUG

Level: 1d6

Form: Slug emits ghostly whispers

Effect: Whether the attack against the primary target hits (and deals damage normally) or misses, the bullet's malignance isn't spent—it attacks up to 3 additional targets within short range of the primary target. (The PC rolls an attack against each one.) Each additional attack successively increases the GM intrusion range by 1. If a GM intrusion is triggered, the haunted bullet hits something other than what the attacker intended, such as an ally.

HEAVENLY FIRE ROUND

Level: 1d6

Form: Bullet emits a silvery glow

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. An attack with the round deals 1 additional point of damage on a successful attack (or 2 more if the cypher is level 5 or higher). If the same target is hit a total of three times by a heavenly fire round in the same minute, they are transformed into a pillar of salt, meaning they are effectively dead until alchemy or curse-breaking magic is applied.

HELLFIRE SLUG

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Bullet casing seems to burn with red flame

Effect: A successful attack deals damage normally. In addition to potential damage from the initial attack, the bullet explodes in an immediate radius, inflicting fire damage equal to the cypher's level (roll an attack against each creature in the area separately, including the initial target, who may or may not have already taken damage).

HEXING ROUND

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: "HEX" scribed on bullet case

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute.

A successful attack with a hexing round doesn't damage the target; instead, a target whose level is equal to or less than the round's level is hindered on all tasks. Additional successful attacks against the same target hinder their tasks by additional steps. If a target is struck by a number of hexing rounds equal to half or more of their level, they enter a "hexed" state for a number of days equal to the round's level. A hexed target resembles someone sleepwalking who takes whatever suggestion is given them, even if that proves harmful. A hexed PC can attempt to break the enchantment once each day at dawn, and each time they're damaged, by succeeding on an Intellect defense roll. NPCs whose level is higher than the cypher's can break free a couple of days after they're hexed, or sooner if they take damage.

IMPERVIOUS SLUG

Level: 1d6

Form: "INVULNERABLE" scribed on bullet case

Effect: Someone successfully attacked with the bullet gains a number of points of Armor equal to the cypher's level for one minute. The Armor is effective against all forms of damage, including those that normally ignore Armor.

INEBRIATING ROUND

Level: 1d6

Form: Amber liquid visible through bullet case; leaves an amber, whiskey-smelling streak in the air when fired

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. Instead of taking damage, a successfully attacked target immediately moves one step down on the intoxication track. Additional successful attacks continue moving the target on the track.

Intoxication track, page 66

Unlike most other alchemical rounds, an inebriating round can simply be swallowed by someone to gain the effect (however, doing so doesn't infuse the inebriating effect for one minute as it would to a gun it was fired from).

INTERROGATION ROUND

Level: 1d6 +1

Form: "ASK" scribed on bullet case

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. The target takes damage normally. If the target has a mind and can speak a language known to the gunfighter and the target's level is equal to or less than this cypher's, the target is compelled to truthfully answer one short question immediately put to them by the gunfighter. Additional successful attacks allow for truthfully answered follow-up questions. (If the attack with an interrogation round kills or incapacitates them, the target uses their dying breath to answer.)

NECROTIC ROUND

Level: 1d6

Form: Bullet case seems like rotting bone

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute.

The necrotic round contains a core of undead flesh; it and subsequent bullets fired from the gun for the next minute mean that targets react according to their status.

Against Undead: Undead targeted by a necrotic round regain health equal to 5 plus the cypher's level with each hit—undead cognizant enough to know what's happening usually don't evade these "attacks."

Against the Living: The living target takes damage normally, and the necrotic flesh begins to spread through the living target's flesh; if a target whose level is equal to or less than the cypher's is successfully attacked twice with a necrotic round within a minute, the unlife overwhelms their living flesh in a horrific wave, turning them into a zombie. The zombie acts according to its nature, but it ignores the gunfighter that created it unless provoked by them.

Demon, page 322

Demon, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 54*

Intoxication track, page 66

Zombie, page 371

Zombie, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 170*

OTHERWHERE SLUG

Level: 1d6

Form: "OTHERWHERE" scribed on bullet case

Effect: Firing the slug creates an invisible doorway within immediate range that only the shooter can see and use (plus any targets they designate). The doorway leads to a chilly, lightless cavern about 20 feet (6 m) in diameter. While the cold air is breathable, it is a bit thin, and the stone making up the periphery is charcoal-like in color.

The doorway to otherwhere lasts for a number of days equal to the cypher's level. When the door closes, visitors are automatically expelled back to their initial location.

POSSESSING ROUND

Level: 1d6

Form: Bullet burns with a reddish, heatless flame

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. An attack with the round deals 1 additional point of damage on a successful attack (or 2 points if the cypher is level 5 or higher). If the same target is hit a total of three times by a possessing round in the same minute, they become possessed by a demon. The newly demon-possessed target ignores the shooter unless provoked.

SOBERING ROUND

Level: 1d6

Form: Bullet smells like strong, bitter coffee; leaves a cloudy, coffee-smelling streak in the air when fired

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. Instead of taking damage, a successfully attacked target immediately becomes sober, no matter their position on the intoxication track.

Unlike most other alchemical rounds, a sobering round can simply be swallowed by someone to gain the effect (however, doing so doesn't infuse the sobering effect for one minute as it would to a gun it was fired from).

SOUL-KILLING ROUND

Level: 1d6

Form: "ETERNAL DEATH" scribed on bullet case

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. The target takes damage normally, or takes 2 additional points of damage if the cypher is level 5 or higher. If the target is killed by a gun infused with a soul-killing round, their soul is destroyed permanently. That goes for demons and other animating spirits as well as for people. For instance, if a demon in stolen flesh is killed, there's no need to salt and burn the body, because the demonic presence is erased, as opposed to merely being banished.

SYMPATHY SLUG

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: "SYMPATHY" scribed on bullet case

Effect: Firing the round causes the gun to emit a spray of pleasingly colored lights, sounds, and scents filling a short area for one hour per cypher level. All positive interaction tasks made in the area gain an asset. Creatures who've made up their minds about a topic may be open to revisiting the issue. PCs add +1 to recovery rolls made in the area.

THUNDER SLUG

Level: 1d6

Form: Rumbles faintly like distant thunder

Effect: Firing the slug creates a region of hazed, billowing air from which the sound of distant thunder rumbles. The region fills an adjacent short area (or long area if the cypher is level 5 or higher) and lasts for about a minute.

Any creature that enters (or begins their turn in) the area is blasted with bone-rattling thunder and takes 1 point of damage.

UNRAVELING ROUND

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Gray and corroded-looking bullet; leaves an ashy streak in the air when fired

Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. If an object no larger than a 10-foot (3 m) cube is targeted, the object descends two steps on the object damage track if the object's level is equal to or less than this cypher's. (The object is immediately destroyed if its level is less than half the cypher's level.)

If a creature is targeted, successful attacks made against the creature with unraveling rounds ignore its Armor.

Object Damage Track, page 116

WANTED SLUG

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: "WANTED" scribed on bullet case

Effect: The bullet only fires if aimed at a WANTED poster. Assuming the poster is hit (a routine task if within short range and nothing else is distracting the shooter) the spent shell gains a special resonance with the creature indicated on the poster. If the spent slug is collected, it acts like a soul magnet, pulling in the direction of the individual shown on the poster, no matter how far away they are. The holder of the slug also has a general sense of how far their quarry is—somewhere in the same building, somewhere in town, miles away, hundreds of miles away, etc. The spent slug retains this affinity for a number of days equal to the cypher's level.

WASHING ROUND

Level: 1d6

Form: "BATH" scribed on bullet case; leaves a sudsy, fresh-smelling streak in the air when fired

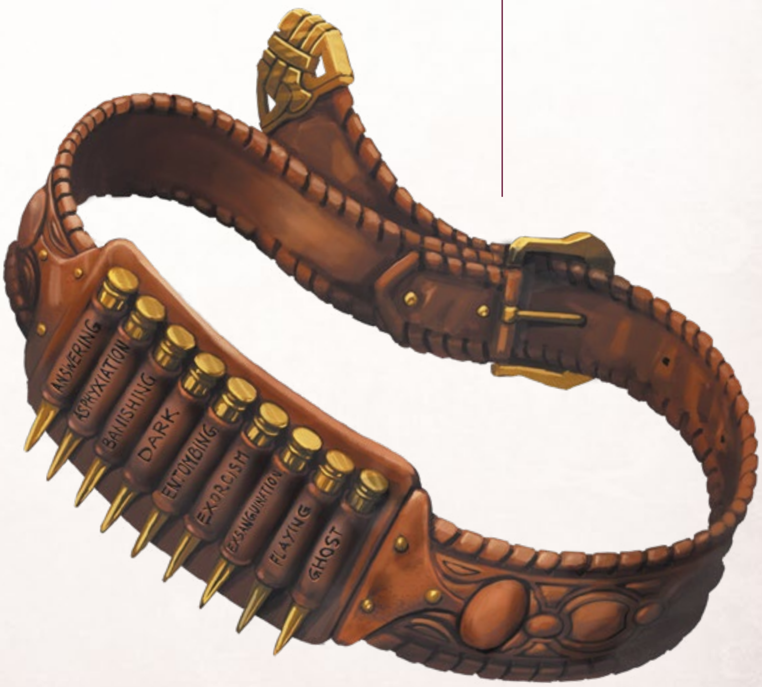
Effect: When this round is fired from a gun, additional attacks made from the gun gain the same benefit for the next minute. Instead of taking damage, a successfully attacked target is immediately subject to a good scrubbing, leaving them and their clothes a bit damp, but clean and as odor-free as if they'd washed and laundered in the finest bathhouse. If the cypher is level 5 or higher, the effect is so potent that the target's positive interaction tasks are eased for an hour afterward.

WATCHER SLUG

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: "SEE UNSEEN" scribed on bullet case

Effect: When a watcher slug is fired (whether as an attack or just into the air), the shooter immediately gains the ability to perceive creatures and objects within long range whose level is equal to or less than the cypher's that are normally invisible, out of phase, only partially in the same realm, hiding, or merely under partial physical cover for one minute.



ALCHEMICAL ROUND FUSION EFFECT

If a gun fires an alchemical round that infuses it with a magical effect while the weapon is still infused with the effect of a previous alchemical round, the result of the fusion is random and unstable, as follows.

d20	Fusion Effect
1	Both infusion benefits are canceled in an alchemical blast dealing a number of points of damage equal to the levels of both cyphers to the wielder and everyone in immediate range on a failed Speed defense roll, or 3 points even with a successful roll.
2	The wielder is affected—no defense roll—as if targeted by an attack made by one of the infusions, and both infusion benefits are canceled.
3	The wielder is affected—no defense roll—as if targeted by an attack made by both of the infusions, and both infusion benefits are canceled.
4	Both infusion benefits are canceled and the gun melts into a lump of slag.
5	One infusion benefit is canceled (GM decides); gun wielder is stunned for one round.
6–8	The previous benefit is canceled, but the new one functions normally; gun wielder is dazed for one round.
9–10	One infusion benefit is canceled (GM decides); gun wielder is not adversely affected.
11–19	Both infusions work without interaction.
20	Both infusions work without interaction, and the duration of both is increased to ten minutes.

WEIRD WEST ARTIFACTS

The weird west artifacts described in this chapter include those created by alchemists, sorcerers, demons, and other supernatural beings, as well as a few leftover relics of an inhuman precursor species and their horrifying enemies (known as the Ilu and the Nihilal, respectively, in The Ghost Range setting).

If your setting doesn't include these specific concepts, reskin likely looking artifacts (and for that matter, cyphers noted in the previous section) to better fit your setting's history. For instance, if your weird west setting leans heavily into steampunk, maybe "engineers" create most of the fantastic options of the setting, so that instead of a "demon pistol" (a demon in the shape of a six-shooter), characters gain a "gauss pistol" that fires tiny steam-powered automatons into the target's flesh.

Some weapon artifacts are noted as potentially self-aware. Refer to the Self-Aware Artifacts section for what that could mean for a PC who acquires such an item.

Ilu, page 149

Nihilal, page 150

The Ghost Range, page 144

Self-Aware Artifacts, page 141

WEIRD WEST ARTIFACTS

d00	Artifact
01–04	Conspicuous badge
05–08	Deck of second chances
09–12	Demon pistol
13–17	Downtime bandana
18–21	Everfull shot glass
22–25	Hand of the Eclipse
26–29	Illuck Stone
30–34	Ilu idol
35–38	Lightning eye
39–42	Magebreak manacles
43–46	Nihilal tendril horn
47–50	Persuader
51–55	Philosopher's gun
56–60	Ring of seeping travel
61–64	Salubrious snuffbox
65–68	Shadow duster
69–73	Spirit reflecting knife
74–79	Swarm ring
80–84	Tanglefoot lariat
85–91	Tracker's map
92–95	Vorpal six-gun
96–00	Wheel of consumption

CONSPICUOUS BADGE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Sheriff's badge that always catches the light just right

Effect: If the wearer polishes, touches, or merely thinks about activating their worn and visible badge as part of a persuasion or intimidation task, the task is eased by two steps, or three steps if the artifact is level 5 or higher.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

DECK OF SECOND CHANCES

Level: 1d6

Form: Standard card deck; however, face cards take on strong resemblance to deck's current bearer

Alternate Form: Sometimes a deck of second chances becomes linked with a group instead of an individual bearer; in such cases, the face cards take on the resemblance of everyone in that group

Effect: Each time the bearer of the deck (or a member of a group linked to the deck) would otherwise die, a random card is drawn and disappears from the deck. The beneficiary of this effect immediately regains Pool points equal to the artifact's level they can allocate however they choose.

In addition, different cards grant different effects, as follow. To determine the effect, draw a card from a standard card deck that includes jokers, or use the Midnight Deck. (If no deck is handy, the GM determines the card drawn.)

A character can also choose to draw a card from the deck at any time (regardless of whether they face mortal peril), and gain the additional benefit noted for that card, if any.

Number Card, Any Suite: No additional effect other than the bearer's survival.

Gears (Diamonds) Face Card: In addition to the bearer surviving, they find a random expensive item in their possession.

Guns (Clubs) Face Card: In addition to the bearer surviving, they find their weapons and bandoliers fully loaded, including one random alchemical round.

Elixirs (Hearts) Face Card: In addition to the bearer surviving, they gain an alchemical protective sheen (granting them +1 to Armor) that lasts until midnight.

Eyes (Spades) Face Card: In addition to the bearer surviving, the creature responsible for almost killing the bearer takes a number of points of Intellect damage equal to the artifact's level.

Ace, any Suit: In addition to the bearer surviving, they gain a free level of Effort that they can apply to any task, which they must use before midnight.

Jackalopes (Jokers): Bearer survives, but instead of bouncing back, they are treated as if debilitated until they rest for ten hours.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

DEMON PISTOL

Level: 1d6 + 3

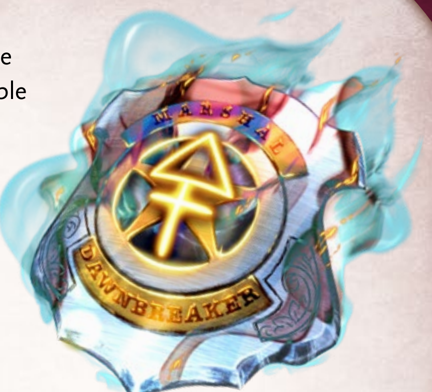
Form: Six-gun-shaped demon; potentially self-aware

Effect: This firearm is often a heavy long-range weapon (but it can take on smaller form factors, becoming a medium or light pistol in the process). Attacks with the demon pistol are eased, or eased by two steps if a light pistol.

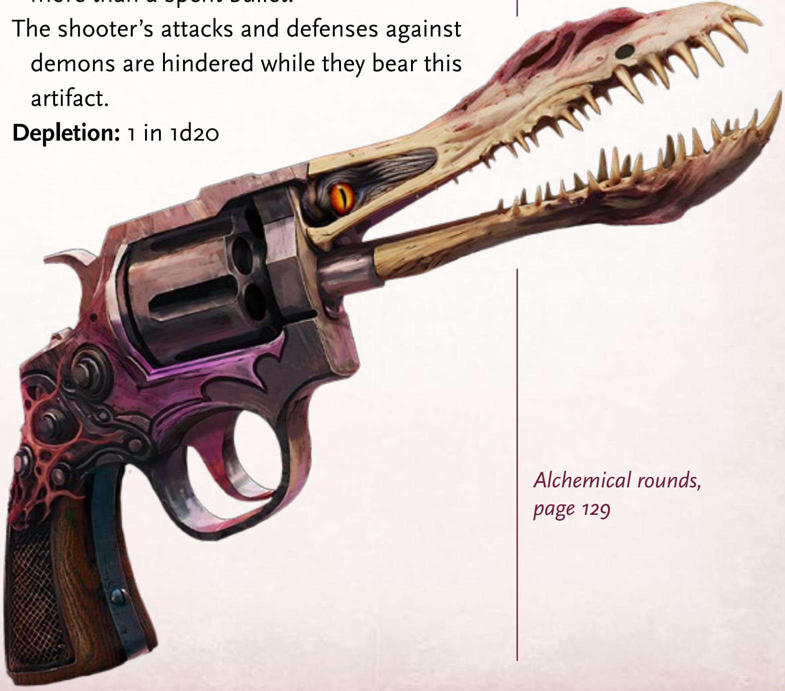
If the shooter wishes, a successful hit causes the bullet lodged in the wound to transform into a tiny demonic imp (level 3) with mouths for eyes. The imp automatically deals 3 points of damage each round to the target until the target removes the imp with a successful Speed-based roll; once removed or a minute elapses, the transformation magic fades and the body is revealed as no more than a spent bullet.

The shooter's attacks and defenses against demons are hindered while they bear this artifact.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20



Debilitated: see damage track, page 218



Alchemical rounds, page 129

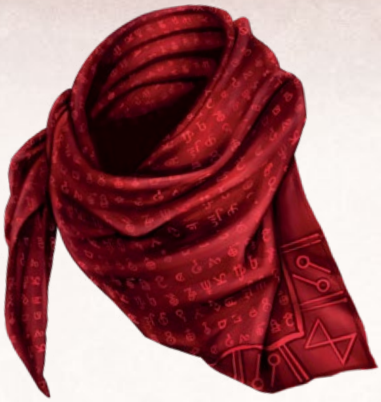
DOWNTIME BANDANA

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Kerchief stitched with alchemical symbols

Effect: When the wearer pulls the bandana up over their mouth and nose as part of another action, time stops for everyone but them, allowing the wearer to act and/or move without interruption from outside forces for one full round (or for two full rounds if the artifact is level 7 or higher). Moving or damaging objects and creatures is possible for a wearer acting during an interval of stopped time, but doing so immediately ends that interval.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6



Drawing Attention, page 124

EVERFULL SHOT GLASS

Level: 1d6

Form: Shot glass with alchemist signature or mark

Effect: Once filled from a standard bottle of whiskey or other liquor, the shot glass refills itself with the same quality of liquor each time the previous shot is drained and the glass is set upright on a bar, table, or level surface.

The drinker decides whether any given shot has the standard intoxicating effect, or if the shot has no effect whatsoever.

Intoxication Track, page 66

Depletion: 1 in 1d00

HAND OF THE ECLIPSE

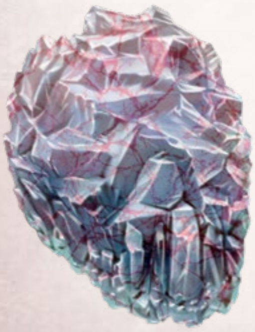
Level: 10

Form: Sealed glass jar holding a child-sized mummified forearm and hand that clutches a corroded silver coin

Effect: User can summon the Tomb Moon into the sky if they spend several rounds concentrating to do so. The summoned Tomb Moon persists for 1d10 hours before returning to its previous chaotic orbit.

Tomb Moon, page 178

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (upon depletion, user's soul is drained away by the Tomb Moon)



ILLUCK STONE

Level: 8

Form: Head-sized lump of crystal with red filaments running through it

Effect (Alien): Bearer rerolls 1s (NPC bearers avoid a stroke of bad luck).

What's not immediately obvious—though may become so with experience—is that ill luck is visited upon someone close to the bearer, whether a friend or a stranger, often in the form of a freak accident that hurts or kills them, usually within a day, as the GM determines. Examples include slipping on a wet surface, falling into a sinkhole, or being gored by a runaway bull, all the way up to drawing the attention of something terrible. The GM determines the severity of the incident, but the level of the threat is commensurate with the artifact's level (level 8).

The bearer can't choose not to reroll 1s as long as they bear the Illuck Stone. If the bearer tries to part ways with the stone, it somehow appears among their possessions again. Only by giving it to a new bearer can the old bearer part ways, though they become the first victim of bad luck when a new user would otherwise experience bad luck.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (upon depletion, recharged if brought into a proscribed zone)

ILU IDOL

Level: 6

Form: 2-inch (5 cm) tall figurine of a humanoid sitting cross-legged, densely etched with hieroglyphs

Effect (Alien): A successfully attacked target within short range whose level is equal to or less than the artifact's disappears; the target's essence is trapped in the artifact. If a previously trapped creature was already in the artifact, it appears where the newly trapped one was located.

No time passes for a creature trapped in the artifact. The only way for a creature to escape is if the idol is destroyed, the idol's bearer wills the trapped creature free, or the bearer traps a new creature.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (check per successfully trapped creature; upon depletion, newly trapped creature remains trapped only for a few days before the fading magic releases them)

LIGHTNING EYE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Glimmering pearl-sized crystal droplet

Effect (Alien): If the artifact's bearer is damaged by electricity, the bearer regains a number of Pool points equal to the damage the electricity would normally inflict.

In addition, the wielder can throw a long-range lightning bolt as their action, attacking up to three creatures in a line in an electrical attack that deals damage equal to the artifact's level.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (upon depletion, recharged if brought into a proscribed zone)

MAGEBREAK MANACLES

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Metal manacles etched with alchemical symbols

Effect: These manacles, which can be applied to both wrists of a willing or helpless target, hinder manual tasks by two steps (or four steps if the target's hands are manacled behind their back). In addition, the manacles prevent the use of alchemical, magical, or other uncanny abilities if the target's level is less than the artifact's. (PCs must succeed on an Intellect-based roll against the manacles' level before using a supernatural ability and, on a failed attempt, take Intellect damage [ignores Armor] equal to the manacles' level.)

Depletion: 1 in 1d00 (check per day of use)

NIHILAL TENDRIL HORN

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Ancient stone with a twisted, conical shape (vaguely horn-like), scribed with antediluvian etchings; potentially self-aware

Effect (Alien): If held like a weapon and activated by pointing the horn at a creature within long range, a writhing tendril is spat at the creature. If the targeted creature is hit with the attack, the target faces one of the following effects, different each time the horn is used. Other horns might spit tendrils with different effects, or do something else entirely.

d6	Horn Effect
1–4	Tendril wraps target, preventing physical tasks and dealing damage equal to the artifact's level each round until the target escapes. Either way, tendril desiccates and turns to dust after about a minute.
5–6	Tendril attempts to eat its way into target via mouth, ears, or eyes, inflicting damage equal to the artifact's level that ignores Armor. If the target survives, the tendril desiccates and turns to dust. If the damage kills the target, the tendril successfully enters the corpse. About a minute later, target's body tears open, and an awful thing emerges, which attacks the nearest living creature.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

ALIEN ARTIFACTS

Hard to Understand: Some of the artifacts described in this section are creations of the Ilu or Nihilal, as noted with the Alien tag in the Effect line for each. To use them, a character must first figure them out— see Advanced and Alien Tech.

Dangerous to Use: The same artifacts are dangerous to use, as doing so risks drawing attention.

PERSUADER

Level: 1d6 + 1

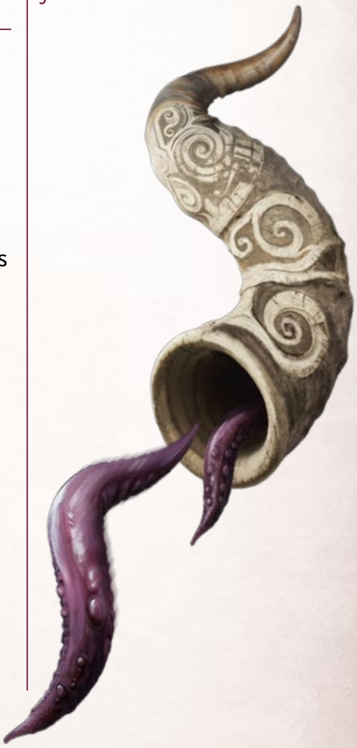
Form: Pistol studded with intimidating spikes; produces menacing vapor and/or growls when owner attempts to intimidate; potentially self-aware

Effect: This firearm is a medium long-range weapon (though lighter and heavier versions are possible). When the pistol is visible (even if still holstered), the shooter's intimidation tasks are eased by two steps.

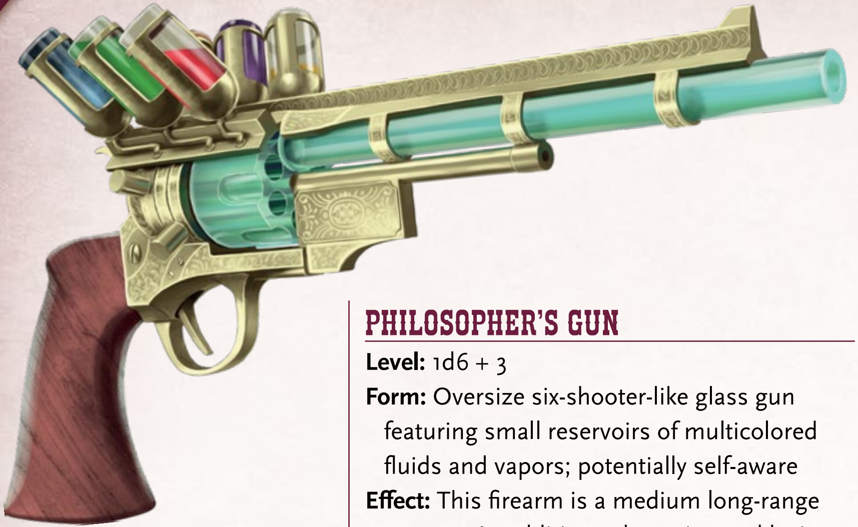
When the shooter wishes, a bullet fired from the gun that would otherwise strike a target instead hangs menacingly in front of the target's face, granting the shooter an immediate additional opportunity to intimidate the target, a task that gains an additional asset. After the intimidation attempt, the shooter decides whether to allow the hanging bullet to complete its trajectory and damage the target, or to fall harmlessly to the ground.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check per menacing bullet fired); upon depletion, can still be used as a normal gun of its size

Awful thing: *level 5; health 18; attacks with toothed tentacles; where damaged, target's skin is discolored for several weeks*



Advanced and Alien Tech, page 16



PHILOSOPHER'S GUN

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Oversize six-shooter-like glass gun featuring small reservoirs of multicolored fluids and vapors; potentially self-aware

Effect: This firearm is a medium long-range weapon. In addition, when triggered by its owner, the philosopher's gun synthesizes one variety of alchemical round and adds the round to the chamber; an attack using that round is available on the character's next turn. A typical philosopher's gun can only synthesize one type of alchemical round; however, if the artifact is level 7 or higher, two different round varieties may be synthesized, which the owner chooses between when triggering the synthesis. If the artifact is level 9, the gun synthesizes one of the two fixed alchemical round varieties immediately, quickly enough that the owner can attack with it as part of the same action.

Alchemical rounds, page 129

Depletion: 1 in 1d10; upon depletion, can still be used as a normal gun of its size

RING OF SEEPING TRAVEL

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Pale crystal ring a little too large for any finger it is tried on

Effect (Alien): As the wearer's action, the wearer and their equipment transform into a mass of quivering slime. For one minute the wearer can seep through dirt, earth, stone, structures, and other inert objects, moving up to a long range each turn while in this form. The wearer can't physically affect inert matter and objects, but can make a pseudopod melee attack against creatures that deals a number of points of damage equal to the artifact's level.

Alternatively, a bearer not wearing the ring can peer through it to see invisible objects or creatures, as well as out-of-phase objects or creatures.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (upon depletion, recharged if brought into a proscribed zone)

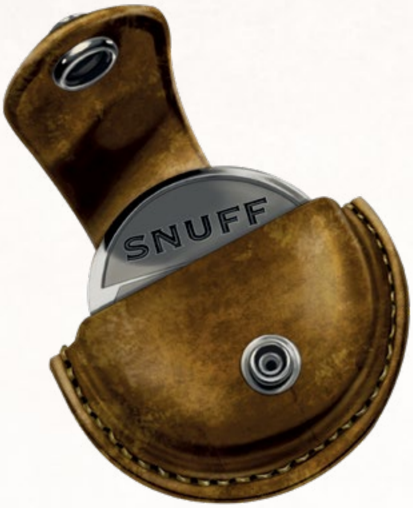
SALUBRIOUS SNUFFBOX

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small ornate container of powdered tobacco (snuff)

Effect: Owner who takes a pinch of snuff regains a number of Pool points of their choice equal to the artifact's level.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10



SHADOW DUSTER

Level: 1d6

Form: Coal-black leather duster (long, heavy overcoat)

Effect: A shadow duster functions normally as light armor. If a shadow is within immediate range, the wearer can slip from view for up to one minute, becoming as one with the shadow as their action, effectively easing their stealth task to hide by a number of steps equal to the artifact's level. The wearer can stay still and remain essentially invisible as long as they take no action. Alternatively, at any point before one minute elapses, they can step out of any other shadow within long range, even shadows separated by walls or terrain. (The owner gains a sort of sixth sense about other shadows while they're hiding, learning about general shape and placement, but nothing more.)

Depletion: 1 in 1d20; upon depletion, can still be worn as a normal duster

SPIRIT REFLECTING KNIFE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Light blade with hilt (called a "bowie" knife in some settings); potentially self-aware

Effect: This knife is a light melee weapon. Attacks made with it are automatically eased (two steps total).

In addition, the user gains two assets for noticing invisible creatures, spirits, and not-currently-manifested ghosts in the area by looking for their reflection in the blade. If spotted, such a creature within immediate range must answer one question put to it by the knife wielder if the creature's level is less than or equal to the knife's and if the knife wielder succeeds on an Intellect attack.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20; check each time a spirit is spotted and questioned

SWARM RING

Level: 1d6

Form: Ring made of dark crystal with strange etchings (of what might be bugs)

Effect (Alien): Bearer summons a swarm of tiny bug-like creatures that persist for one minute. The swarm's level is equal to the artifact's level. The swarm attacks a designated foe within short range and hinders their perception tasks for the duration.

The bugs seem like roaches at first glance, but a closer look reveals them to have too many legs, eyes, and mouths—none are exactly like the other, and all make a sort of sickly twittering sound.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (upon depletion, recharged if brought into a proscribed zone)

Ghost, page 331

Ghost, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 44*

Cursed beasts, page 79

Celebrities, page 77

SELF-AWARE ARTIFACTS

One method alchemists use to empower an object—usually a firearm—with uncanny abilities is to infuse a spirit that already has access to such abilities. Said spirit could be a ghost of a once-living person, an elemental, a synthesized mind, or perhaps something inscrutable called from antediluvian epochs.

Item Goals: Some self-aware artifacts have a goal; others can hardly be bothered to communicate with their bearer. A few options for those with goals include the following.

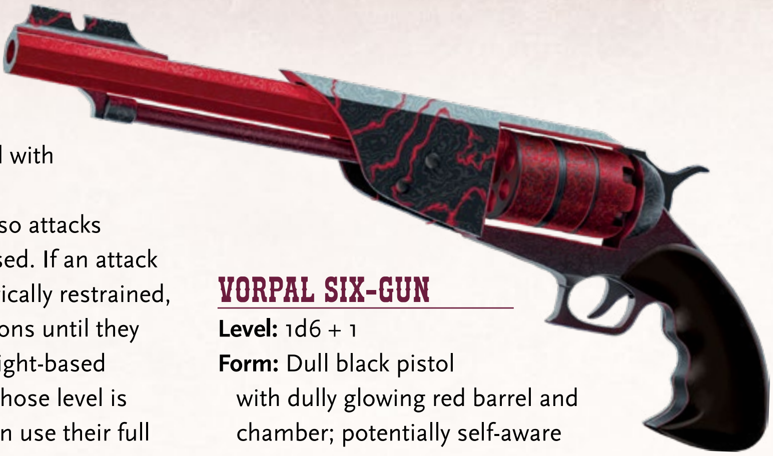
d6	Artifact Goal
1	Conclude the unfinished business of the ghost infused with the item
2	If a weapon, defeat a certain class of targets, such as cursed beasts or celebrities
3	Spread order and rule of law
4	Spread chaos and anarchy
5	Befriend/assist bearer
6	Undermine/gaslight bearer ("cursed")

Artifact Communication: Some self-aware items can speak directly into the minds of their bearers (or potential bearers), but no one else can hear the item. Others can speak audibly, allowing anyone nearby to potentially communicate with the item.

Artifact Autonomy: If a self-aware artifact has a goal, then they work to achieve it in some fashion. Potential options include the following.

d6	Ability to Act
1	Convincing/cajoling bearer
2	Punishing the bearer's inaction by causing minor pain (a couple of points of Speed or Intellect damage) once each day, or each time a perfect opportunity to act is ignored by the bearer
3	Creating auditory and visual hallucinations designed to lure/trick bearer into a situation where they have few choices other than do as the artifact wishes
4	Offering a reward; possibly a new artifact function that can only be used in pursuit of the goal, or the location of some great treasure
5	Acting of its own accord when no one is looking
6	Taking mental control of the bearer for up to an hour per day on a failed Intellect defense roll; bearer may not remember what they did during the lost hour

Artifact Depletion: Self-aware artifacts don't deplete the same way regular artifacts do; if a depletion is indicated, the entity within the artifact is "on sabbatical" or is otherwise choosing not to communicate. Usually, the artifact will return to normal after a few days, or when the user does something to mollify the entity granting the item self-awareness.



TANGLEFOOT LARIAT

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Rope glinting with entwined silver threads tied with a lasso at one end

Effect: User's short-range lasso attacks made with the lariat are eased. If an attack succeeds, the target is magically restrained, unable to take physical actions until they can escape (PCs make a Might-based roll as their action; NPCs whose level is higher than the artifact's can use their full turn to escape), the user lets them go, or midnight comes.

Alternatively, the lassoer can instead choose to make an eased attack with the intention of just snaring a target's arm or leg, hindering the target's physical tasks and preventing them from moving more than an immediate distance on their turn until they use their full action to remove the rope (or the lassoer drops their end).

Tesla Lasso Variant: This electrified variety is especially effective against demons. All tasks related to restraining demons (whether immaterial or wearing stolen flesh) with the lariat are eased by two steps; treat the lariat as two levels higher for purposes of demons attempting to escape.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

TRACKER'S MAP

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Basic but accurate map of the region where the map is activated

Effect: Unfolding the map allows its bearer to locate a creature whose level is less than the artifact's, no matter where the creature is. The bearer must know or have met the target, know the target's full name (or "true" name), or have an article of clothing or other personal belonging of the target's. If they do, the target's location is pinpointed (to within a short area) on the map. The map includes locations near the map bearer as well as locations near the target, though depending on the distance separating the two, it may not be to scale. The map shows the target's location for one day per artifact level, or until a new target is named.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

VORPAL SIX-GUN

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Dull black pistol with dully glowing red barrel and chamber; potentially self-aware

Effect: This firearm is a medium long-range weapon (though lighter and heavier variants are possible). Attacks made with it are automatically eased and deal an additional 2 points of damage (6 points total).

In addition, if a PC rolls a major effect and the target's level is equal to or less than the artifact's, the PC can choose to implode the target's head. For most living creatures that possess only a single head, that's the end.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check per head implosion); upon depletion, can still be used as a normal gun

WHEEL OF CONSUMPTION

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Crystal hoop about 1 foot (30 cm) in diameter

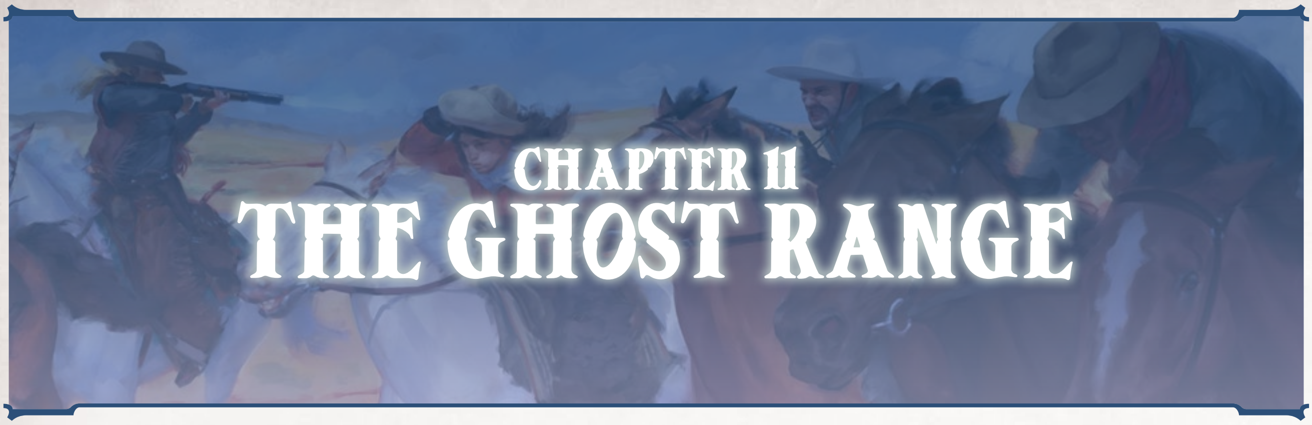
Effect (Alien): Anything passed through the hoop whose level is less than the artifact's is disintegrated. Living creatures take damage equal to the artifact's level each round they persist in keeping any part of their body within the ambit of the wheel. This item could be used as a weapon, but it's awkward, hindering melee attacks (or a ranged attack) made with it by two steps. On a hit, the hoop deals damage equal to its level.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (upon depletion, recharged if brought into a proscribed zone)

PART 3

WEIRD WEST SETTING

CHAPTER 11: THE GHOST RANGE 144
CHAPTER 12: MIDNIGHT 154
CHAPTER 13: THE OUTER RANGE 165
CHAPTER 14: OTHERLANDS 172



CHAPTER 11

THE GHOST RANGE

The rider tugs the brim of his hat low, squinting down the arroyo burned red by the setting sun. Another day lost, he reckons, tracking the thieves through the badlands. The thieves are following a path marked out on a dead prospector's map. And the rider follows them.

He forgets the prospector's name—Lilly? Rita? Doesn't matter. She strayed into a proscribed zone. Sure, she made it out alive, despite everything. Then bragged about her map, how it led to a "lost city," at the Trail's End Cantina in Midnight City.

Outlaws got the map off the prospector's cooling body faster than a jackalope with its antlers on fire. They lit out at dawn, the promise of riches and ancient magic dancing in their eyes.

But nothing good comes of entering a proscribed zone. The rider was sent to catch the thieves. He's followed them for three days, gradually closing the gap.

Now, he aims to stop them before they stir up something antediluvian. Something bad enough to threaten everyone in The Ghost Range.

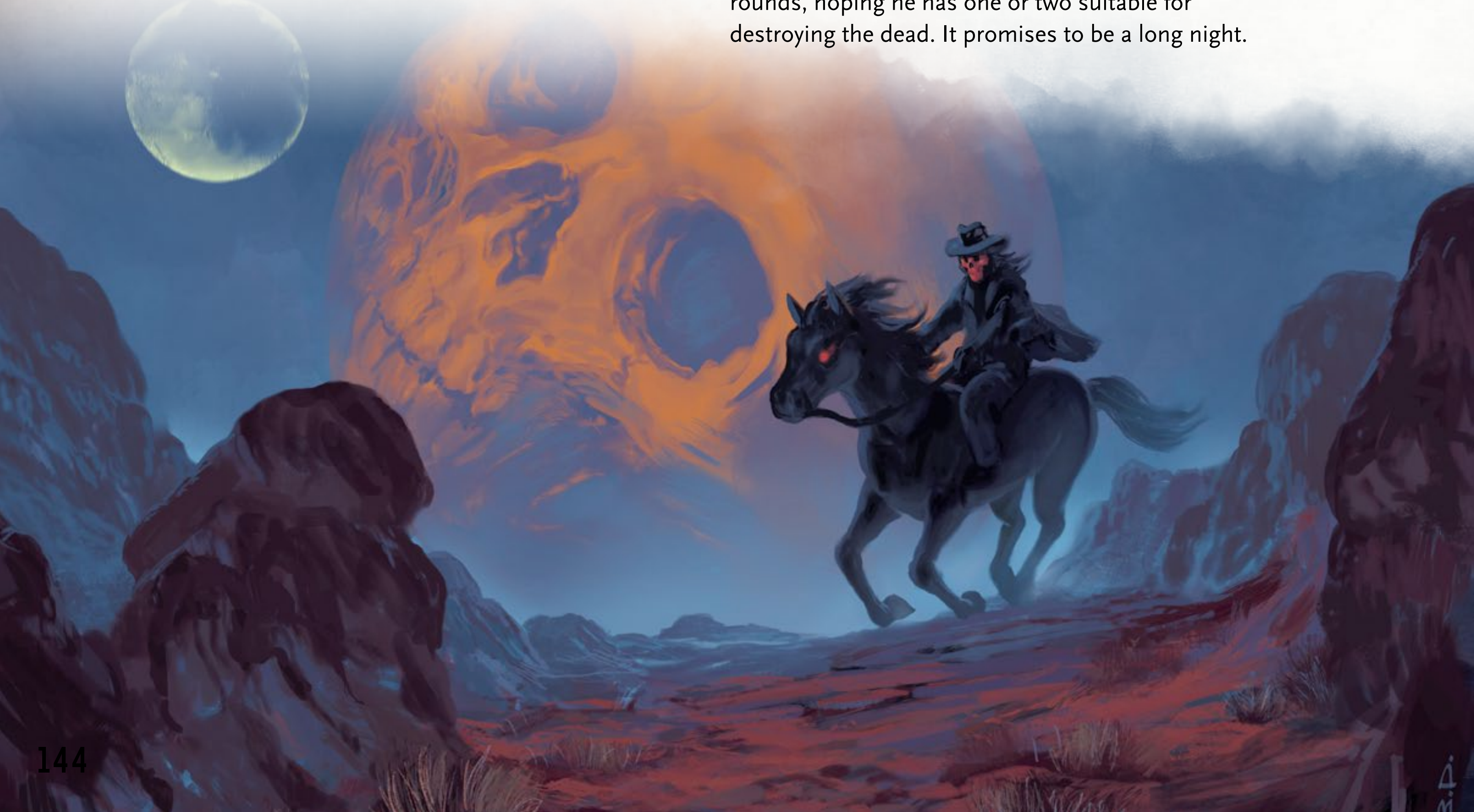
Ahead, a shadow cast by a twisted cactus abruptly curls, like a gnarled finger crooking. The rider's hands drop to the butts of his twin six-shooters. His roan snorts but stands her ground.

Had the thieves set a trap? The rider doesn't think so. More likely a wraith or other necrovore lies ahead in ambush, waiting for full dark. The recent and entirely unwelcome appearance of the Tomb Moon cutting across the heavens means undead will stir this night.

The only upside is the outlaws will be equally put out. If he's lucky, some vampire will do the rider's work for him. Maybe, he thinks. 'Cept he can't leave it to chance. He'll continue the chase.

But not until morning.

Sighing, the rider checks his bandolier for alchemical rounds, hoping he has one or two suitable for destroying the dead. It promises to be a long night.



USING THE GHOST RANGE

The Ghost Range is a weird west setting designed for use with the *Cypher System Rulebook* and selected rules described right here in *High Noon at Midnight.* It exists on an entirely alternate world historically distinct from the real one.

If you're reading this, you're probably aiming to run a campaign set in The Ghost Range. Here's what you can expect:

- Chapter 11 (this chapter) provides a top-down overview of The Ghost Range. PCs will be familiar with some aspects of what's described, but some sections will reveal deeper lore than the average character knows. Yet.
- Chapter 12: Midnight is a detailed description of a city (called Midnight) in The Ghost Range. Major NPCs, narratives, and kick-offs for various job opportunities (adventures) await the PCs in Midnight.
- Chapter 13: The Outer Range describes other important regions of The Ghost Range territory.
- Chapter 14: Otherlands presents other interesting locations outside of The Ghost Range, including the Moon, Perdition (a doorstep to Hell), and the erratic Tomb Moon.
- Chapter 15: Showdown in Alchemy Alley, Chapter 16: Five Card Fiasco, and Chapter 17: When the Tomb Moon Is Full, despite being in Part 4: Adventures in the Weird West, are setting-specific romps that take place in and around the city of Midnight (though they are easily adapted to other weird west settings). The Cypher Shorts in Part 4 could also be run in the setting, but are not so specifically tied to The Ghost Range.

Chapter 12: Midnight, page 154

Chapter 13: The Outer Range, page 165

Chapter 14: Otherlands, page 172

Chapter 15: Showdown in Alchemy Alley, page 180

Chapter 16: Five Card Fiasco, page 192

Chapter 17: When the Tomb Moon Is Full, page 206

Antediluvian Entities, page 149

MAJOR ASPECTS OF THE SETTING

Old West styles and themes pervade The Ghost Range, but the big ideas that put the "weird" in the weird west of this setting are as follows. Broadly speaking, PCs know about these elements as part of living in the setting. Other things are not so obvious, including the truth about the antediluvian entities—those are things PCs might learn during play.

ALCHEMY AND MAGIC

Magic suffuses The Ghost Range. Most interact with it as alchemy. Those who pursue it are usually known as alchemists. Both PCs and NPCs can be alchemists, though not all alchemists are equal. Only a subset become skilled enough to create autonomous creatures known as forgeborn, and even fewer can create especially powerful forgeborn like locomotems.

Some alchemists learn their craft at the grand Alchemetorium in the city of Midnight, but plenty more learn from a mentor or are self-taught. Many stand on the side of civilization, or at least of the law. But a few are bad apples, like the notorious John Loomis, the Watertown Warlock.

Besides forgeborn, select goods fashioned by alchemists are sought-after tools across the setting. Some of the most ubiquitous—but still relatively rare—are alchemical rounds and slugs, coveted by gunslingers of all stripes.

Other magics exist in the setting, including those perpetrated by demons and other supernatural creatures. Their abilities, if they're called out at all, are derided as sorcery.

GHOSTS, CURSED BEASTS, AND DEMONS

There's no question that supernatural creatures exist. They're encountered often enough in badlands and other sparsely populated regions that their appearance, while unwelcome, doesn't come as a complete surprise. Indeed, knowing that a ghost town is literally haunted by unquiet spirits inspires more dread in those who approach one than in settings where ghosts are considered made-up fables.

Locomotem, page 84

Alchemetorium, page 162

John Loomis, the Watertown Warlock, page 208

Alchemical rounds and slugs, page 129

Trail's End Cantina, page 160

Azrakith, page 171

THE GHOST ACCORDS

Ghosts and demons don't come into town often, but it does happen. In some places, if they're well behaved, they're not immediately run out. Such a place includes the Trail's End Cantina in Midnight. That's on account of something known as the "Ghost Accords." The agreement allows a ghost, demon, or other obviously non-human creature to move about without being immediately attacked, exorcised, or banished so long as they don't attack, influence, attempt to possess, or otherwise harm regular folk in turn. If there's any reason to believe the supernatural creature has violated the agreement—such as, say, a wanted poster for a specific demon in spurs named Azrakith—the accord no longer holds for them.

Tomb Moon, page 178

The Secret of Stardust, page 149

Ghost Origins: Spirits sometimes linger for familiar reasons—unfinished business, tragedy, a sense of duty, strong emotion, and so on. The underlying reason any of this is possible is assumed by most to be because of the erratic appearance of the Tomb Moon in the sky. However, some alchemists believe differently (see The Secret of Stardust).

Frostwalker, page 81

Chupacabra, page 79

Dire coyote, page 80

Cursed Beast Origins: Most people lump cursed beasts in with demons and even with ghosts. But in reality, each "cursed beast" has its own unique provenance. Some definitely *are* the result of demonic sorcery or alchemical meddling, like frostwalkers. But others are natural creatures whose natures make them inimical to human society, like chupacabras or dire coyotes.

Moon, page 175

Perdition, page 172

For more guidance on portraying Indigenous folks in the Old West, see Other Options for Indigenous Inclusion on page 37.

Demon Origins: Demons are from Hell—everyone knows that. But their access to The Ghost Range is pretty much due to the "town" of Perdition. The place is also called "Hell's Doorstep" for a reason, and some figure that if they could demolish the place, demonic activity would go to zero, or close enough. But finding Perdition on the map is a problem.

Afterlife in The Ghost Range: Everyone's afterlife is different; at least, that's what people believe in The Ghost Range. Maybe they're right. However, it's also generally accepted that if someone is wicked and irredeemable enough, their personal afterlife falls within the ambit of Hell. And what really goes on in the various layers of that infernal realm can hardly be guessed, despite the lies of all the demons who access the mortal world through the gates of Perdition.

NATIVE NATIONS

Though The Ghost Range is partly built on popular conceptions of the Old West, one of the ways it departs from such tropes is that Indigenous folks are part and parcel of the setting, not stereotypes. People living in the city of Midnight and other named locations of the setting include Indigenous folks who've made a life for themselves outside the lands their ancestors still hold. Many others live within their own communities, or travel between the two for trade or any of a dozen other reasons. Which is to say, Indigenous folks are not merely backdrop NPCs or stock villains.

The term "Native Nations" indicates a diverse tapestry of peoples, each with their own rich cultures and spiritual traditions. Hundreds of distinct communities compose the Native Nations in The Ghost Range setting, including some on the surface of the Moon.

In fact, you as the GM could run a game in The Ghost Range from the perspective of people from one of the Native Nations. Doing so would mean bringing your own unique insight, experience, and culture to the gaming table, and/or one or more of your players could potentially do the same.

Otherwise—except for what's shown on the map, the Moon, and what's noted in this section—specifically detailed Native Nations places are deliberately sparse, and are sovereign spaces where outsiders may only visit when invited.

Hundreds of distinct communities compose the Native Nations in The Ghost Range setting.

STARDUST AND DUSTFALLS

Falling stardust resembles silvery snowflakes, glowing ever so faintly in the dark. In direct sunlight, it evaporates within a couple of rounds and is gone; on cloudy days, it takes a few minutes. But stardust is otherwise stable, even when exposed to artificial light, and even if that light is magically summoned.

VITAL FOR ALCHEMY

Stardust is an important resource in The Ghost Range because alchemists value it above all other materials: everything they do requires a bit of stardust. Even those who only fashion fleeting magical effects possess a ring, amulet, piercing, timepiece, or other object infused with stardust. PC alchemists gain such an item of their choosing—equal in value to an expensive item—as part of their starting equipment.

Expensive item, page 202

OTHER STARDUST USES

Stardust is also sometimes used as a currency in The Ghost Range setting, passing between people that have never done and who will never do alchemy. However, any given vial or bag of stardust is eventually claimed by an alchemist, most of whom are exasperated to see such a valuable resource used for such a common purpose as paying for a bottle of whiskey.

Stardust as Currency, page 119

And then there's the direct effects stardust has on various creatures.

The following effects only pertain to raw, unworked stardust. Stardust used by an alchemist to create an object or effect is essentially transmuted into something else, or is used up.

Effect on Living Creatures: Living creatures who inhale a bit of stardust gain a light-headed feeling for a brief period; PCs gain 1 Intellect point and lose 1 Speed point.

Inhaling Stardust, page 119

Effect on Demons: Demons dislike stardust. No one knows why for sure. During a dustfall, demons desperately seek shelter, whether in possession of someone's body or in immaterial form. If someone shoves a vial or bag of stardust in their face, they recoil. If someone dumps a quantity of stardust on their physical form, they gag and try to get it off them as quickly as they can. One wit once noted that "demons are about as partial to stardust as I am to raw sewage." (Mechanically, a demon forced into close proximity to stardust is dazed, and their actions are hindered for one round. After that initial contact, they can act normally, if with obvious disgust.)

Effect on Ghosts: Ghosts don't seem to notice stardust if it's not specifically called out by someone living—something about stardust renders it invisible to their supernatural senses.

But stardust "notices" them. Anytime a ghost comes into direct contact with at least half an ounce of stardust, there's a chance that their time haunting the mortal world concludes—they move on to whatever afterlife awaits them. (Mechanically, ghosts of level 2 or lower automatically move on, and are gone forever. Level 3 and higher ghosts only move on if they want to, or if they are successfully attacked by a character wielding a sufficient quantity of stardust. If a level 3 or higher ghost moves on, they are also gone forever.)

DUSTFALLS

Some alchemists carry almanacs able to predict, with about 70 percent accuracy, the likelihood of upcoming falls of stardust. These dustfalls—resembling very light and gentle snowfalls, where the individual flakes glimmer like stars—share several traits.

- Dustfalls always occur at night. (Maybe they happen during the day, too, but if so, the material is lost to the sunlight.)
- Dustfalls only happen when it's cloudless, or relatively so.
- Dustfalls deposit stardust in an area no more than a few hundred yards wide.
- The area of the dustfall moves, creating something known as the "path of stardust," sweeping across the nighttime landscape like an alchemical brush stroke, stretching for many dozens or even hundreds of miles before the dustfall ceases.
- In a given long area experiencing a dustfall, the dustfall lasts for about a minute.
- Any tasks associated with conducting alchemy or similar magic in the path of stardust are eased, which is why some refer to dustfalls as periods of "high magic."
- Alchemist almanacs that predict dustfalls are usually accurate enough to get the date of an upcoming dustfall correct, but the window of when one exactly begins is a few hours wide, and the specific location is hard to establish, usually somewhere within a region a few miles in diameter.
- Stardust deposits after a dustfall are notoriously hard to gather.

Cursed beasts, page 79
Dire coyote, page 80
Chupacabra, page 79

Gathering Stardust

A character can reasonably expect to gather one or two small bags of stardust weighing no more than 5 ounces (140 g)—each equal to an expensive item.

Expensive item, page 202

And that's assuming the character was prepared and has at least an hour to gather the stuff uninterrupted—stardust is resistant to capture. Part of that is down to the time it takes to reach a deposit, because even when predicted, the actual fall might occur a few miles away on a different butte, and it takes time to reach that spot, other creatures are drawn to it, and sunrise always seems to happen sooner than expected.

Stardust Frequency

A given region may expect a dustfall once every seven months or so, on average. Some prospectors say they know of special areas that get dustfalls more often, though such claims often turn out to be lies.

Some alchemists believe that over the last few decades, dustfalls have declined in frequency and in the volume of stardust deposited. They worry that eventually, the vital alchemical resource will run out.

Dustfall Dangers

The good news is that necrovores and similar spirits, as well as most demons, don't come out in a dustfall, or in the hours immediately before and after. The bad news is that a dustfall has other dangers.

Mesmerizing Fall: Creatures who first enter an active dustfall must succeed on a difficulty 3 Intellect defense roll. On a failed roll, the target takes 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) and stands mesmerized for the next few hours. The effect ends at sunrise, if they take damage, or if another creature spends their turn shaking and calling to the mesmerized creature.

Cursed Beasts: Akin to how alchemical tasks are eased, cursed beasts are effectively one level higher than normal while they gallivant in a dustfall. Thus it's almost guaranteed that dire coyotes, chupacabras, or some other cursed beasts will also be out and about in the path of stardust, and most are not eager to share the night with gatherers taking away the shiny material they're high on.

ANTEDILUVIAN ENTITIES

Especially studious individuals in the setting know of the Ilu, but given that the Ilu disappeared "thousands" of years ago, it's not top of mind. Even Indigenous peoples who first found evidence of Ilu existence at a handful of locations—and classified those locations as proscribed zones—rarely dwell on the topic, other than to suggest that no one enter those places if they value their lives, despite the powerful relics proscribed zones contain. Even when two Native Nations warred, they never broke the unspoken treaty and entered proscribed zones looking for weapons. The weapons, they said, were too terrible for humans to ever use against other humans.

Which means the following information is probably only discovered if PCs can't help but become interested in the topic, which they might if they play the "Five Card Fiasco" adventure to its end.

ILU

Before there were people, ghosts, demons, animals, or even plants, the World wasn't empty. It was inhabited by something different. Not much is known about what, because epochs separate then and now, as well as a handful of catastrophes, including a world-spanning lava flood.

What *is* known about the "Ilu" is surmised from a handful of relics taken—at great risk—from proscribed zones.

Intelligent and as capable as gods, the Ilu were beings of mineral and crystal. Long-lived as mountains, they built amazing works on and below the World. Or possibly more accurately, they built the World itself, and other worlds nearby. Maybe even the inscrutable celestial mechanism whose destruction—epochs later—led to dustfalls. Their power was unsurpassed; their language itself could alter reality. Remnants that have been unearthed today are called "power words" by those lucky enough to find tiny fragments.

Evidence suggests that despite being composed of stone, their cunning and curiosity led them to experiment with life of a different sort: fleshy, biological stuff. It might just be that Ilu meddling is what led to the vast variety of animals, plants, and people in The Ghost Range and other territories today. Indeed, some relics of the Ilu even have humanoid form, though it's unlikely the Ilu themselves looked anything like people.

But the Ilu were opposed by beings nearly as powerful as themselves, though entirely different in form and purpose.

The Ilu disappeared much longer ago than thousands of years; it's actually a few billion.

Power Word Subtle Cyphers, page 125

"Five Card Fiasco," page 192

THE SECRET OF STARDUST

The secret origin of stardust is one of the great mysteries of the setting. It's like gravity; no one denies its existence or its utility. But its ultimate origin is a source of much conjecture.

One line of speculation, as taught in the Alchemetorium, goes like so:

Once, there was a "metaphysical machine" that ferried spirits directly to their afterlife. Some suggest the machine was a great craft piloted by angelic entities, others that it was a world-spanning lattice of wheels within wheels that automatically shepherded ghosts onward.

But a cataclysm occurred, and the machine was destroyed, becoming so much glittering detritus.

Detritus that still rains upon the World as "stardust" during dustfalls.

The same cataclysm spawned the Tomb Moon, a solidified blob composed of slagged "machinery" and all the spirits that were being ferried to their afterlives when the unnamed cataclysm happened.

A related hypothesis suggests that the "metaphysical machine" somehow contained—or was itself—the afterlife. If that's true, and it's gone, what's the nature of the afterlife that spirits and ghosts who finally move on now face, assuming they're not claimed by demons?

Tomb Moon, page 178

NIHILAL

Unlike the Ilu, the Nihilal were beings of empty space and immaterial energy. Creatures of stillness and oblivion, they saw themselves as agents of entropy and the eventual decay of the universe to nothingness.

The industry of the Ilu sickened the Nihilal. Without bodies of their own, they seeded servitors of living protoplasm, horn, and flesh. These *things* of various sort were able to eat, dissolve, and crumble mineral—and do the same to fledgling life-forms the Ilu had begun to decant. (It's possible things were corruptions of the biological life the Ilu created.)

CONFLICT AND ASCENSION

War raged between the Ilu and Nihilal for millennia across many fronts. When it was done, the Ilu and the Nihilal were gone. Evidence suggests that that's because the surviving Ilu ascended into some other realm, possibly one they constructed in order to finally rid themselves of Nihilal interference.

"Five Card Fiasco," page 192

Cave of the Wild, page 202

PROSCRIBED ZONE FEATURES

d10	Proscribed Zone Element
1	A huge jade wall as smooth as a polished gem; the closer one gets to it, the more weird red tendril-like shadows seem to cloud the interior just below the face
2	Fine purple sand covers the floor; "currents" visibly churn the surface, suggesting one or more larger objects moving below
3	Black crystal grows in great cactus-like spires down from the ceiling, with tiny blue lights instead of needles speckling the flat "leaves"
4	While touching the jade green orb at zone's center, character feels as if they're in a different reality—maybe one where they're falling through an empty void, or one filled with horrible things now able to see the character, too
5	Home to swarm of small creatures—scorpions? Well, they skitter like scorpions, but they look more like starfish with stingers
6	Glass ceiling holds what looks like a massive humanoid heart in stasis; many smaller glass columns hold what appear to be circulatory systems, similarly without any other organic matter
7	Wind smelling of something "familiar" that no one can ever quite place blows through the area, sometimes gently, other times growing to tornado strength
8	No light penetrates, magical light is doused, and creatures normally able to see in the dark cannot
9	Submerged in a briny, viscous liquid; possible the liquid is the body of a single amorphous organism
10	Smooth metallic sculptures jut from the floor, suggestive of cloaked humanoids, but only barely

PROSCRIBED ZONES

Though departed, the Ilu left behind hollow cavities in the earth filled with the leftover tools of their war with the Nihilal. In the vast stretches of time since then, a handful have breached the surface due to ages of erosion and the activities of modern creatures. Though these repositories vary in content and character, all contain baffling objects and structures. Some have purposes that no longer apply in this epoch, useless to any but the vanished Ilu. Others are possessed of great magical power anyone might appreciate.

However, many of these objects act as keys capable of opening an out-of-phase prison cell containing one or more Nihilal servitors, and perhaps even individual Nihilal. A few alchemists believe the Ilu left because it was the only way they could be certain that the prison of jade and crystal they'd locked the Nihilal away in would hold. Others think that everything the Ilu left behind has merely become contaminated.

Sensible people don't risk entering a proscribed zone and disturbing the strange artifacts secreted there. But of course, when it comes to people, there's always some who think they know better.

An average proscribed zone resembles a weirdly regular cavern breached by erosion or mining, and is anywhere from a few dozen to many thousands of feet in diameter. Some contain only weird stone shapes that are thankfully inanimate. Others have oddities—in addition to strange relics that might be recovered there—that would give most explorers pause; see the Proscribed Zone Features table for some inspirations.

An example proscribed zone is presented in "Five Card Fiasco" in the section called Cave of the Wild.

GAMING IN THE GHOST RANGE

Expectations for equipment, cyphers, artifacts, and more in the setting include the following.

CURRENCY AND EQUIPMENT

Price categories are a fine default assumption for currency in the setting, but when in-world NPCs discuss payment for trade and services rendered, the most common unit referenced is the "eagle." The currency conveniently uses the symbol "$," so one eagle can also be written as $1. Eagles are circulated as coins of various denominations—feathers ($.01), talons ($.25), half-eagles ($.50), eagles ($1.00), double-eagles ($2.00)—though paper eagles are also printed in limited quantities.

Category	Eagle Value
Inexpensive	Up to $1
Moderate	$1– $10
Expensive	$100– $500
Very expensive	$1,000– $10,000
Exorbitant	$30,000+

That said, gold dust, barter, private scrip and tokens, and sometimes even stardust can be used as currency in the right circumstances, as described in Chapter 9. Which means PCs have many options for purchasing equipment.

CYPHERS

Subtle cyphers are one default for PCs in The Ghost Range. Suitable triggers for handing out subtle cyphers include when PCs succeed at a task (or fail at one), find out something new, remember something important, take some time to rest and prepare, wake from a vivid dream, change their mind about something, and so on.

However, other cyphers are also available.

Power Words: PCs may also gain rare power word subtle cyphers, which use special rules. Power words should usually only be gained after a character has had a close run-in with a supernatural entity or site, especially those influenced by the Ilu or Nihilal.

Alchemical Fabrications: Manifest cyphers are also available to the PCs in the form of objects made by alchemists. The most common of these are alchemical rounds and slugs, which use special rules. Alchemical rounds can sometimes be found, looted, or gained as gifts from NPCs. But PCs are at least as likely to gain these through direct purchase from an alchemist, either from a shop in a larger town or from one who wanders the trails peddling their wares to far-flung communities. (Alchemical rounds and slugs are expensive or, if level 5 or higher, very expensive.)

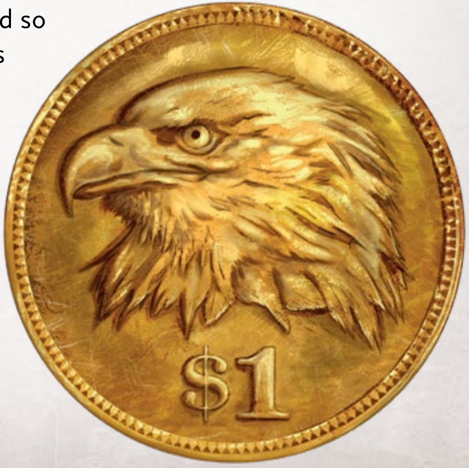
ARTIFACTS

Most of the weird west artifacts in the setting are special items crafted by alchemists. Unlike alchemical rounds, they're not offered for sale—instead they're kept and used by the alchemist who made them; given as gifts, rewards, or an inheritance; lost and later found by the PCs; or taken as loot from bandits or defeated alchemists. It's possible one could be purchased, though the price would be very expensive to exorbitant.

However, artifacts recovered from proscribed zones also sometimes circulate, usually to no one's long-term benefit.

TECHNOLOGY

Unlike some weird west settings, technology in The Ghost Range is limited. Aliens have not landed and distributed ray guns to cowboys, steampunk engineers haven't littered the setting with clanking machines and zeppelins, and so forth. Instead, uncanny feats are accomplished primarily through magic, usually in the form of alchemy, though demonic sorcery is also present.



Price Categories, page 202

Alchemical rounds and slugs, page 129

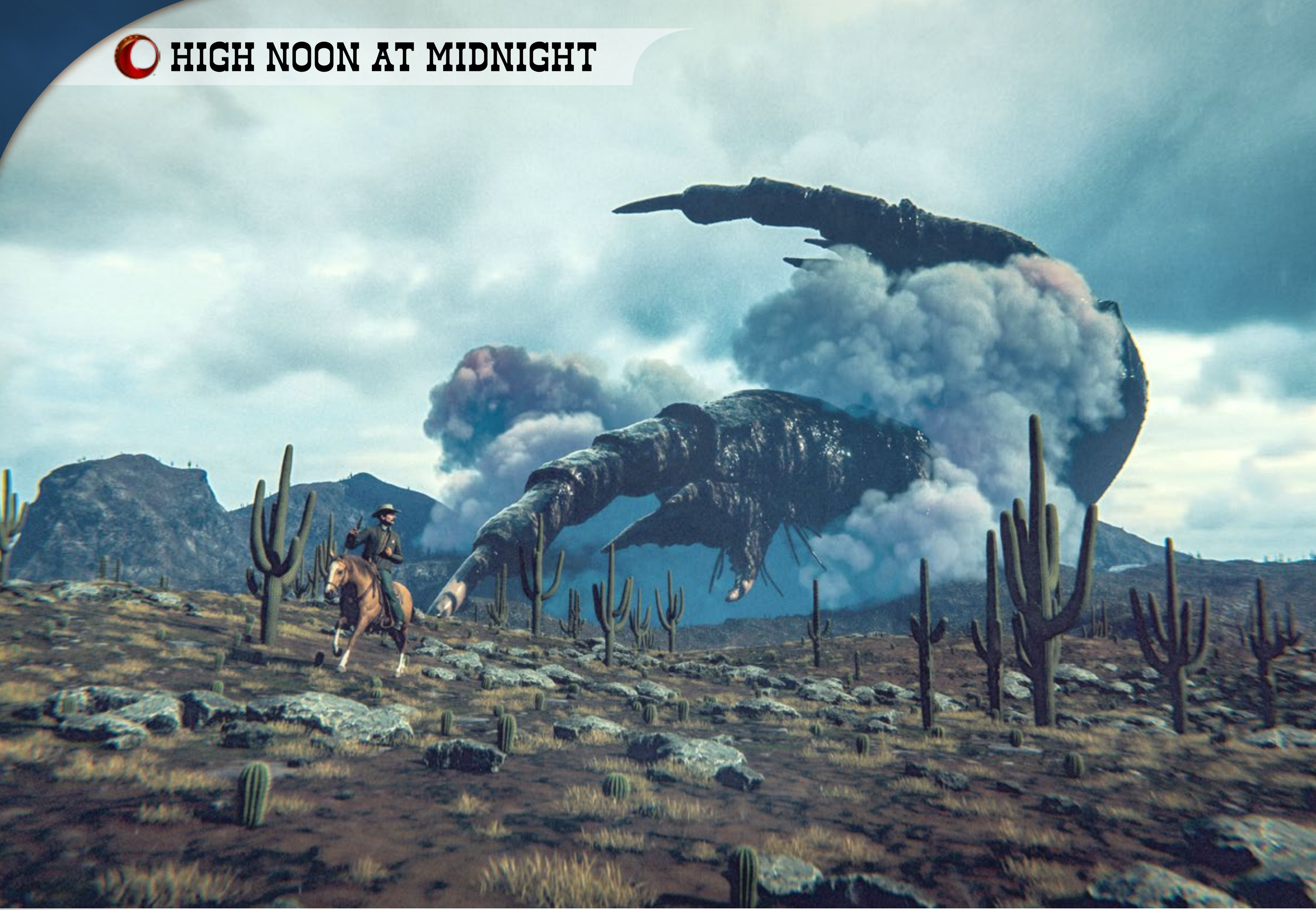
Weird West Artifacts, page 136

Chapter 9: Currency and Equipment in the Weird West, page 118

Additional Weird West Equipment , page 120

Subtle cyphers, page 378

Power word subtle cyphers, page 123



DAY-TO-DAY ASPECTS OF THE GHOST RANGE

Amazing alchemical feats, myths of the Ilu, and dustfalls in the night are no secret to most folks. But day-to-day things are often more pressing in The Ghost Range, and can end up becoming just as life-or-death if not attended to.

LAY OF THE LAND

Vast and unforgiving prairies, badlands, deserts, and mountains comprise much of The Ghost Range. At times, these open expanses are seemingly endless, stretching to the horizon. Other times, towering mesas and buttes rise up. Creeks wind through the region, sometimes pooling into small lakes, or falling in silver-lace waterfalls from higher cliff faces.

Towns, villages, and other communities crop up along trade routes (both wagon and train) and rivers, though some communities are more established (especially those of Native Nations). Other locations include forts built atop strategic bluffs, mining encampments, and remote ranches scratching out a living with well-cared-for herds.

More eccentric outposts and oddities also dot the landscape—hermits' shacks tucked into rocky overhangs, caravans of traveling entertainers or alchemical traders following the roads, and outlaw hideouts sheltered in box canyons. Lone graveyards and ghost towns warn of dangers that linger across the range—cursed beasts, necrovores, and things of more ancient vintage better left alone.

PEOPLE OF THE GHOST RANGE

Scattered across such a wide territory, people are composed of a mix of ethnicities and culture. Some hail from Native Nations and others are descended from people that came to the area from lands across the Great Eastern Sea. They vary not only in physical appearance and outlook, but also in knowledge, skill, and temperament.

There's outlaws and lawmen of course, but also ranchers, homesteaders, and cowboys, as well as hunters, trappers, and fishers. In larger communities, shopkeepers, laborers, entertainers, and "saloonfolk" (cardplayers, bartenders, patrons, sex workers, and more) are common. Professionals can also be found in towns, including doctors, alchemists, lawyers, and undertakers. Plus the occasional preacher, beggar, or even cult member.

Apparel commonly includes wide-brimmed "cowboy" hats, coats and jackets (often leather or fur), and vests (which are sometimes highly decorative) paired with shirts and trousers. Shirts are commonly long-sleeved, and trousers are tucked into boots. Sturdy leather boots (including "cowboy" boots) or moccasins are common. Lots of folks accessorize with scarves and bandanas, as well as belts, buckles, and gloves.

Many folks go about decked out in gun belts, a pistol within easy reach on the hip, with a bandolier or cartridge belt also on display. Others carry unstrung bows (or sometimes strung bows magically treated to preserve the line) on their backs and sport arrows on a hip-slung quiver.

Alchemical rounds can take the form of arrows as well as bullets.

Lawmen openly wear badges declaring whether they're marshals, deputies, sheriffs, or part of some other official organization. Alchemists don't wear badges, but it's usually impossible to miss them, either because of the odd symbols they weave into their dusters and scarves, the magical vials they keep close at hand, or the forgeborn that mutely follow them wherever they go.

WHAT'S A PC TO DO IN THE GHOST RANGE?

In a weird west world like the setting, player characters often take "jobs." During a job, PCs might foil train heists (or attempt them), deal with demons or hauntings, hunt down criminals described on wanted posters, play poker in high-stakes games, collect bounties for eradicating cursed beasts, deliver messages for the postal express, track down outlaws that stole dangerous artifacts, or safeguard outlying communities from outlaws and other predators. Eventually, PCs might find themselves venturing into far more dangerous areas—maybe even to Perdition or the Tomb Moon, or into a "lost city" contained entirely within a proscribed zone—though such adventures likely happen toward the end of a campaign rather than at the start.

Another weird west adventure that can be run as part of a campaign in The Ghost Range is "Ghosts of Ironsaddle," one of the scenarios in Adventures in the Cypher System.

PCs may take jobs because it's fun, to empower themselves, to enrich themselves (or pay off a debt), or because they're thrown into a situation that requires bravery and quick thinking to survive.

A great place to start PCs is with one of the adventures in Part 4, such as "Showdown in Alchemy Alley."

Part 4: Adventures in the Weird West, page 179

Chapter 15: Showdown in Alchemy Alley, page 180

> **"You tell 'em I'm comin' . . . and Hell's comin' with me, you hear? Hell's comin' with me!"**
>
> **—*Tombstone* (1993 film)**

CHAPTER 12
MIDNIGHT

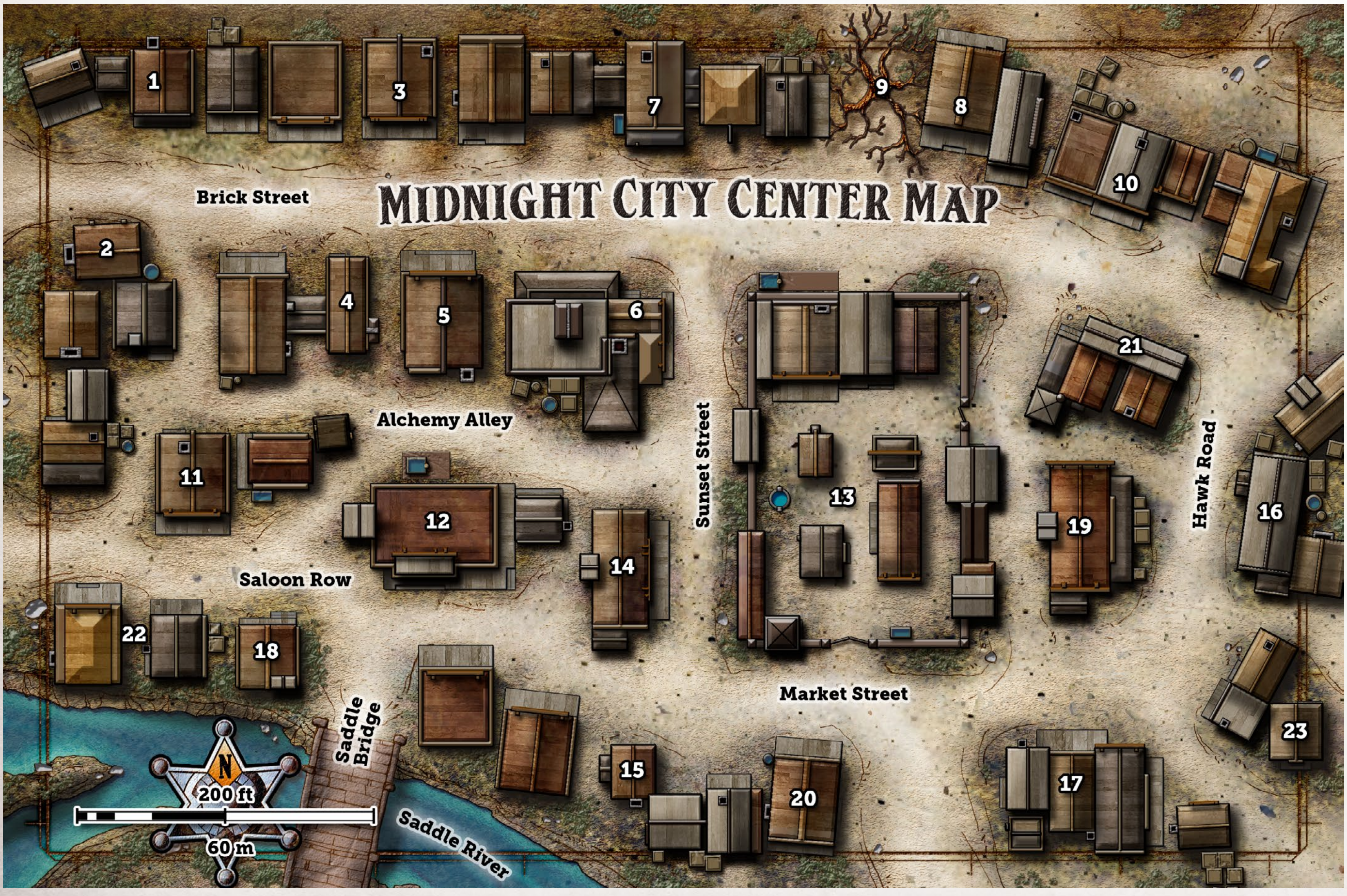
Most towns in The Ghost Range are a scattering of buildings surrounded by an unforgiving landscape, baked and weathered under a relentless sun.

That ain't Midnight.

Firstly, Midnight is a city, not a town, as locals are quick to point out. In fact, Midnight is as close to a metropolis as a pilgrim is likely to find in The Ghost Range, owing to its location along the banks of the strapping Saddle River, the well-traveled Ridgeline Rail Depot, and its enormous population of nearly 5,000 people—plus a few dozen forgeborn and other intelligent beings.

Traders from far and near have set up shops in town, selling products ranging from simple household goods to more esoteric tools needed for hunting, shootin', prospecting, alchemizing, ranching, and more. Which means visitors from surrounding communities and homesteads are drawn to the city on a regular basis to shop for things they can't make themselves or buy locally.

Given the number of strangers in town, including a few looking to make a name for themselves however they can, the law has a well-earned reputation for keeping the peace. If two fellas just *have* to prove


1
3
7
9
8
MIDNIGHT CITY CENTER MAP
Brick Street
10
2
4
5
6
21
Alchemy Alley
Sunset Street
Hawk Road
11
12
13
19
16
14
Saloon Row
22
18
Market Street
Saddle Bridge
23
N
200 ft
60 m
15
20
17
Saddle River

themselves with a showdown in the street—Saloon Row is popular, on account of all the saloons where that kind of foolishness happens most often—they should take an extra moment to sign a "high noon contract." Otherwise, even if one wins the shootout, they'll end up spending who knows how long in the hoosegow (otherwise known as the Jailhouse and Sheriff's Office), or maybe even get strung up on the ghastly Deadman's Tree for murder.

Jailhouse and Sheriff's Office, page 161

Deadman's Tree, page 161

LAWS IN MIDNIGHT

There are at least as many expected norms in Midnight as actual laws on the books. Norms are things like not spitting on people, not cheating at cards, not baring your ass in the street, and that sort of thing. Laws against murder, theft, wrongful imprisonment, stake jumping, and so on are also in effect.

Laws are debated and enacted by city elders, who occasionally meet in the Midnight Courthouse.

A few standout laws and norms include the following.

Enchantment Restriction: It is expressly against the law to control another person's mind or influence their behavior via alchemy or sorcery. Whether someone's picked up a charm from a demon or an elixir from a backroom alchemist, magical mind control is punishable by a minimum of three days in jail, or more severe penalties depending on what the victim did while under another's control.

A corollary is that it's against the law to magically impersonate someone else's likeness and/or voice, especially if the disguised individual convinces a third party to do something they wouldn't otherwise countenance.

High Noon Contract: Local lawyers pioneered this contract to cover gunfighters who willingly have a showdown in the streets of Midnight. If both parties have signed, the winner can't be strung up for murder, assuming there's no collateral damage during the fight. A plethora of pre-drawn-up contracts, with blank lines where the gunfighters' names and signatures go, can be had from many saloons in Midnight.

Of course, if a whiskey-soaked hothead takes a shot at someone without calling them out, the target is within their rights to defend themself, contract or no. Afterward, if the target is the sole survivor, proving the story of what went down becomes paramount. If enough witnesses can back up the defender's story, that's the end of it. Otherwise, the defender may have to face the territorial court, especially if the instigator has friends or relatives that say things went down differently.

Ghost Accords: In some places in the city, including the Trail's End Cantina, demons, vampires, and other supernatural folk can enter without being immediately attacked, so long as they behave, on account of the Ghost Accords. The Ghost Accords don't apply in every part of the city, but public buildings and private offices that don't abide it often post signs indicating so.

Midnight Courthouse, page 162

Trail's End Cantina, page 160

Ghost Accords, page 145

COLORFUL CHARACTERS (NPCs) IN MIDNIGHT

PCs who spend any time in the city are likely to run into one or more of the following residents or frequent visitors.

BESS GOLDENHAND, GUNSLINGER

Dressed in a white leather duster, a white wide-brimmed hat, and gold gloves, wearing a gold-plated pistol ostentatiously on her hip, Bess Goldenhand is something of a celebrity. She meets newcomers with a knowing grin, confident that stories of her reputation as the fastest gun in Midnight have already reached their ears. Indeed, tall tales are told of her exploits.

Bess isn't one to back down from a challenge, even if made by someone who obviously isn't up to her skill. She's got a temper, but she's not one to blow her lid without thinking things through. For one thing, that means she always knows where to find a high noon contract and a pen. She might challenge PCs to a shooting contest, but unless provoked beyond measure, not to a showdown.

Motive: Other than keeping her reputation as the fastest gun (or one of the fastest guns) in Midnight, Bess would prefer a life where her bar tabs and her room at the Grand Midnight Hotel are paid by contest winnings and the occasional job. Though she rarely talks about it, she supports her mother, who's getting on in years but lives alone out on a ranch east of town. A ranch sometimes menaced by dire coyotes and outlaws.

Found At: Bess is most commonly encountered at the Trail's End Cantina and the Midnight Grand Hotel. Sometimes she enters into the shooting contests held every weekend at Lem's Saloon.

Rarely, she takes up her violin and joins the local orchestra for a performance at Millie's Boarding House and Theater.

Bess Goldenhand: *level 5, initiative as level 8; long-range pistol attack deals 7 damage; joker card (cypher) transports Bess to her mother's ranch once*

Tall Tales, page 63

Midnight Grand Hotel, page 159

Lem's Saloon, page 163

Millie's Boarding House and Theater, page 161

BILLY WINTHROP, SHERIFF

Sheriff Winthrop's sheriff's badge is prominently displayed on his blue vest, worn over a black shirt and trousers. Billy is relatively new to the office, as some may guess by the fact he can't be a day older than twenty-five. He puts on a stern face, but he still comes off as a bit nervous to those skilled at reading other people. Only his friends call him Billy—as well as troublemakers trying to rile him up.

Nervous or not, he's a dependable defender of the law. Not long back, when a group of outlaws rode into town, the sheriff stood them off with a hard look, strong words, and the backup of some deputies, without a shot fired. However, rumor is those outlaws are making plans out in the badlands. The sheriff could ask the PCs to join a posse he's putting together to ride out and assess the situation. (This conflict potentially comes to a head even sooner if the "Showdown in Alchemy Alley" adventure is played.)

Motive: The sheriff wants to keep things civil in Midnight. But he'd also like to know how the previous sheriff, his aunt Mathilda Winthrop, disappeared. It's a complete mystery with no leads.

Found At: Walking the streets, greeting newcomers who draw attention to themselves, checking in at various saloons and joy houses; anywhere criminal activity could spring up.

Sheriff Winthrop: *level 4, initiative as level 6; two long-range pistol attacks deal 4 damage each round; carries a couple of sobering rounds*

Sobering round, page 134

Chapter 15: Showdown in Alchemy Alley, page 180

WHISKEY JILL, CANTINA PROPRIETOR

Jill Cloud is sometimes called by her nickname Whiskey Jill, but usually answers to a respectful "barkeep?" or "ma'am?" Her ample figure is wrapped in a multicolored shawl embroidered with cacti, coyotes, and crows. Silver streaks her black hair, only adding to the vigorous, imposing figure she cuts. She greets newcomers with some variation of "What's your poison? Tell me an interesting story, and your first drink is free!"

Jill is good with people, and can usually diffuse a situation with a joke, a perfectly humorous insult, or the offer of a free drink or iron (an iron is a token good for a bottle of top-shelf whiskey in the Trail's End Cantina). But if that doesn't do it, she's got a shotgun behind the bar, not to mention the goodwill of most of her patrons.

Jill left her home when she was young, traveling across much of The Ghost Range in pursuit of a nest of vampires. Afterward, fame from her travels and unexpected opportunities led to her ownership stake in Trail's End.

Motive: Jill wants to run a profitable bar, befriend interesting people, and keep her options open. But she still secretly worries that the two vampires she and her friends failed to find might be out there, plotting revenge.

Found At: Usually at the Trail's End Cantina, but sometimes shopping the famous Iron Nail Market in the early morning.

Whiskey Jill: *level 5, persuasion and intimidation tasks as level 6; health 25; Armor 1 (from magic shawl); immediate-range custom shotgun deals 5 damage to all creatures in an immediate area*

Trail's End Cantina, page 160

Iron Nail Market, page 162

EDWIN HALE, CARDSHARP

Edwin Hale's arrival is foreshadowed by the smell of cigar smoke swirling from the stogie always clamped in his mouth. A gray frock coat, vest, and bowler hat suggest sophistication among the regular crowd at the card tables Edwin frequents. His preternatural ability to read "tells" of his opponents has led to charges of cheating in the past. But so far, none of those accusations have stuck. (His sense of smell is amazing—so amazing, he can usually tell if someone is bluffing or is playing a hand they think is a sure thing.)

If PCs play a game of cards or other game of chance in Midnight, it's probable they'll face Edwin sooner or later.

Motive: Living well by leveraging his gambling skills is an obvious motive. His secret motive is to continue to hide his unfortunate curse of lycanthropy—the source of the enhanced sense of smell he enjoys. A few nights each month he "takes a break from the tables." That's when he bolts himself into chains in his rooms at the Midnight Grand Hotel with a trusted bellhop's aid. He worries that one day folks will find him out. Even with the Ghost Accords in place, he's not sure people will tolerate a werewolf in their midst.

Found At: Anywhere card games are played in Midnight or nearby; sometimes chained up in his room at the Midnight Grand Hotel.

AINSLEY YANG, ALCHEMIST

Ainsley Yang's white, bead-braided hair spills from the purple and white striped cloak of an alchemist who graduated with top honors from the Alchemetorium. She wears reflective goggles, and her long gloves are pocketed for carrying dozens of vials and tinctures. A red scar runs down her right cheek.

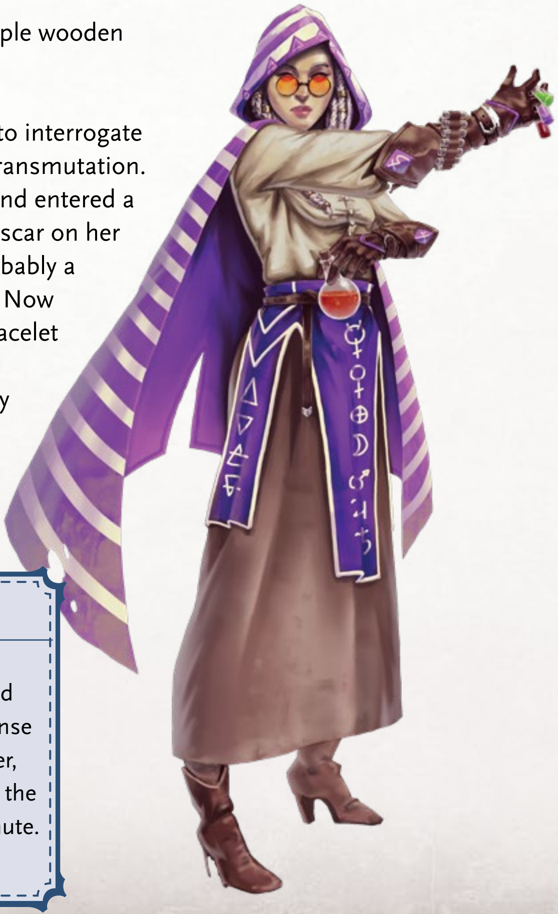
PCs who want to buy alchemical rounds or need some other magical intervention may seek Ainsley out. Alternatively, Ainsley often finds herself in need of special components for her research, and she might seek out the PCs who've made a name for themselves, offering them a job to find a piece of rare meteorite or liquid from a moon pool.

Ainsley is usually accompanied by a simple wooden forgeborn called Cleo.

Motive: Like any alchemist, Ainsley wants to interrogate the World through the lens of magic and transmutation. However, she once made poor decisions and entered a proscribed zone. That's where she got the scar on her cheek, and where a malevolent spirit—probably a wandering Nihilal servitor—got her scent. Now she must wear a special protective jade bracelet at all times, or the entity will manifest and attack. Unless she can find some other way to defeat it first.

She's also interested in acquiring power word subtle cyphers. Ainsley tells those she thinks might have the capacity to gain one (or those who ask about the sign in front of her shop, Elixir Emporium) of her interest in fragments of an ancient magical language of the Ilu. If PCs possess one of these special subtle cyphers, she offers to buy a transcribed version for $500, though she can be haggled up to $1,000.

Found At: Sometimes Ainsley is at her shop, sometimes she's teaching at the Alchemetorium, and sometimes she's traveling outside of Midnight chasing dustfalls or watching for omens.



AINSLEY'S ALCHEMETORIUM CLOAK

Level: 6

Form: Purple and white striped cloak with hood

Effect: The purple stripes glow faintly in response to melee or ranged attacks against the wearer, automatically dealing 6 points of damage to the attacker from "invisible flame" once per minute.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Edwin Hale: *level 3, poker and gambling tasks as level 6; attacks with wolf-headed walking cane; transforms into a werewolf a few nights each month or when he takes more than 5 damage*

Werewolf, page 367

Werewolf, Cypher System Bestiary, page 65

Ainsley Yang: *level 5; as standard alchemist with the addition of her cloak*

Alchemetorium, page 162

Cleo, forgeborn: *level 3; health 15; Armor 1*

Power Word Subtle Cyphers, page 125

Elixir Emporium, page 162

EXPLORING MIDNIGHT

PCs new to the city may be impressed by its size and sophistication compared to most other places in The Ghost Range. To help bring the city to life, you can find inspirations under Town Set Dressing. However, interesting things also happen in a city, which could rise to the level of GM intrusions.

Town Set Dressing, page 39

GM Intrusions for In-Town Encounters and Events, page 40

IMPORTANT PLACES IN MIDNIGHT

Visitors usually arrive in Midnight overland (by horse or carriage), by train, or by riverboat. However newcomers arrive, it's not long before they move from the dusty outskirts of town (comprised of low-rent tenements, boarding houses, and various multifamily homes) to the city's center, where the best services and entertainments can be found.

The city of Midnight extends out about five times as far as the region shown on the map known informally as "city center."

MIDNIGHT CITY CENTER

Paved in fired clay bricks, the aptly named Brick Street runs through a large portion of the city center, past several important businesses, including the Iron Nail Market.

Iron Nail Market, page 162

(1) DRAPER'S LIVERY & STABLE

The sign sways above a metal hitching rail lining the stable's street-facing façade. Several horses, tails swishing, are usually hitched up and munching hay provided by adolescent stable hands seeing to their care.

Jed Draper—a balding man in his early forties with animate, galloping horses tattooed up and down his arms—is happy to talk mounts, but not much else. Visitors can stable their mounts here (or in the barn for longer stays), rent or buy mounts, and even look into acquiring or renting one of the nonstandard mounts Draper keeps as a hobby.

Jed Draper: *level 3, livery and farrier tasks as level 5*

The attached structures include:

- A barn for stabling mounts out of the elements and for longer stays—$1 (an inexpensive cost) per day.
- A small shop where saddles, riding gear, and other riding essential equipment can be bought, including mount rental—$2 per day.
- Stalls for mounts to be treated for sickness or where horse hooves can be cleaned, trimmed, and shod.
- Special paddocks for nonstandard mounts, including the latest sensation in Midnight: a handful of animate cacti specially grown and treated to serve as mounts, and one mostly tame fleshmare named Kent.

Animate cactus, mount: *level 4; short-range spines attack*

Fleshmare, page 84

(2) MIDNIGHT CITY COACH HOUSE

Travelers arriving via riverboat or train (south and north of town, respectively; neither is shown on the city center map) can grab a coach to the city center for a half-eagle (an inexpensive cost). Those arriving in Midnight by stagecoach disembark on the wooden siding in front of the Coach House.

The Coach House is a series of attached garage buildings where coaches in a variety of styles are serviced between drives. The Coach House also keeps a stable of specially trained coach horses, and simple rooms for coach drivers to catch some sleep when not driving.

Coach driver: *level 2, coach driving as level 4*

This is the city's travel hub—travelers on the way to civilized places in and beyond The Ghost Range find the following information posted, or can ask one of the blue uniformed members of the Coach Driver's Guild.

- The train schedule for the Ridgeline Rail Depot located north of town.
- The riverboat schedule for the large rivercraft (pulled by giant bull fish) south of town.
- Stagecoach schedules for travel between select overland routes across The Ghost Range, and beyond.
- Those who want to spend $100 (an expensive cost) can charter the experimental motor carriage kept in a special garage in the Coach House. (The "motor" in this case is a specialized forgeborn whose only task is to spin a crankshaft.)

(3) MOX SISTERS' GENERAL STORE

The sign MOX SISTERS' GENERAL STORE swings on the front of this building's two-story brick and half-timber façade, but everyone in town just calls the place "Sisters."

Other signage, plastered over the windows out front, describes sales for beans, candles, prospecting equipment, and more. One sign reads "We buy demon horns—Inquire within!"

The Mox Sisters—Edith and Max Mox, both preferring no-nonsense smocks and aprons—keep a clean and tidy store, and if they don't have a particular piece of equipment in stock, they say they can get it in on the coach or by train, if a customer is willing to wait a month or so.

Demon Horns? If someone asks about demon horns on account of the sign in the window, one of the sisters (it's hard to tell them apart) takes the inquiry into a back room. She says she and her sister are not alchemists, just folks who aren't partial to the Ghost Accords when it comes to demons. Culling a demon, the Mox Sisters believe, is always proper. Thus they pay a bounty on demon horns equal to $100 (an expensive cost) per matched pair, or $25 for just one.

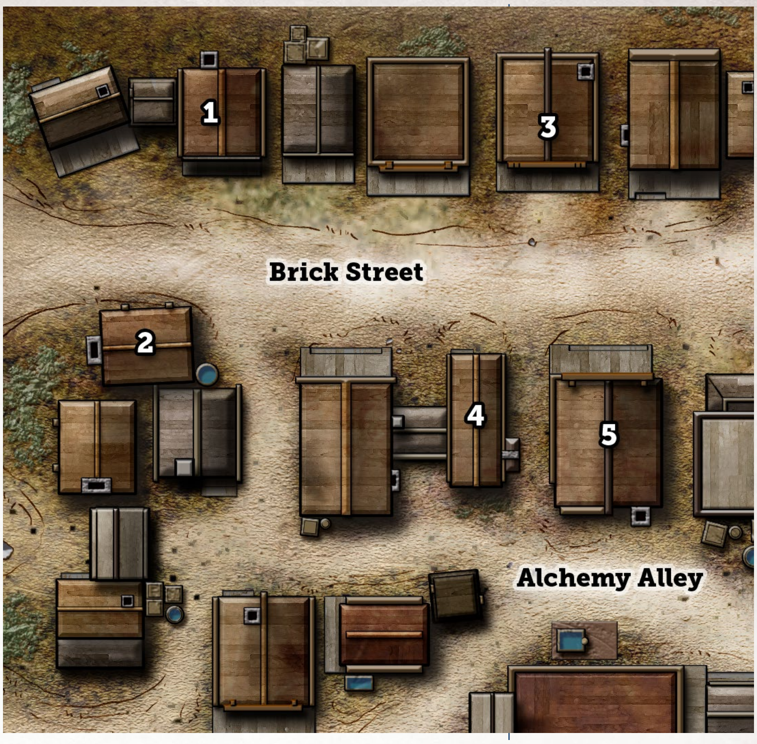
(4) MIDNIGHT GRAND HOTEL

The magnificent sign for this place is not only picked out in gold leaf, but lit by an alchemical glow visible up and down Brick Street.

Inside, the wide lobby is three stories high, surrounded by impressive balconies that look down on granite tiles, lush divans, vivid carpets, and an unlikely variety of potted plants. The reception desk is always staffed by the same hotel clerk: Mr. Stone, a 6-foot (2 m) tall granite forgeborn in a crisp uniform who is the epitome of polite hotel service toward paying guests.

PCs might stay in one of the elegant rooms if they're willing to spend $100 (an expensive cost) a night—those who seem reluctant to part with that many eagles are referred to Millie's Boarding House, which Mr. Stone says is over on Brick Street.

The hotel has a private restaurant in the lobby, which sometimes has entertainment of its own. Guests, including Midnight personalities that keep rooms here (like local celebrity Bess Goldenhand and cardsharp Edwin Hale, among others) can sometimes be found having a meal or drink here instead of out and about in a more rambunctious part of the city.



(5) BARBER SHOP AND BATH

Hair is cut, faces are shaved, and beards are trimmed in the wide front room by barber Eugene Banks. He's a talkative fellow in a striped white and black vest who treats everyone who sits in his chair like a friend. He keeps confidences shared by his clientele, perhaps explaining why folks tend to open up to him. Haircuts are a half-eagle (an inexpensive cost).

Several rooms are set aside in the back for private baths, as well as a larger hot tub fired by an alchemical device. A bath with hot water and towels costs a couple of eagles (a moderate cost).

Bess Goldenhand, page 156

Edwin Hale, page 157

Mox sister: *level 3, business ownership and demon hunting as level 5*

Equipment, page 120

Eugene Banks: *level 2, barbering and positive social interaction as level 5*

Mr. Stone: *level 4; Armor 3*

Millie's Boarding House, page 161

(6) TRAIL'S END CANTINA

The grand façade of this red brick building features a glimmering sign (alchemically enhanced) over wide, swinging double doors that always seem to be letting people in and out. Indeed, a group of folks are usually gathered on the cantina's awning-protected porch, smoking, drinking, taking in the air, and just generally jawing.

Whiskey Jill, page 156

Edwin Hale, page 157

Colorful Characters (NPCs) in Midnight, page 156

Inside, lanterns warmly illuminate dozens of tables and a massive bar carved of granite. Proprietor Whiskey Jill towers behind the bar, talking to and serving customers seated there while overseeing a staff of half a dozen servers, runners, and cooks who prepare simple meals in an adjoining kitchen.

A shot costs an eagle (inexpensive), a bottle of whiskey costs about $5 (moderately priced), and a free bowl of stew and chunk of bread comes with either. Other drinks are also on offer, including glasses (or bottles) of wine and brandy, for similar prices.

Other Poker Players, page 193

"Five Card Fiasco," page 192

Uncanny Saloons, page 40

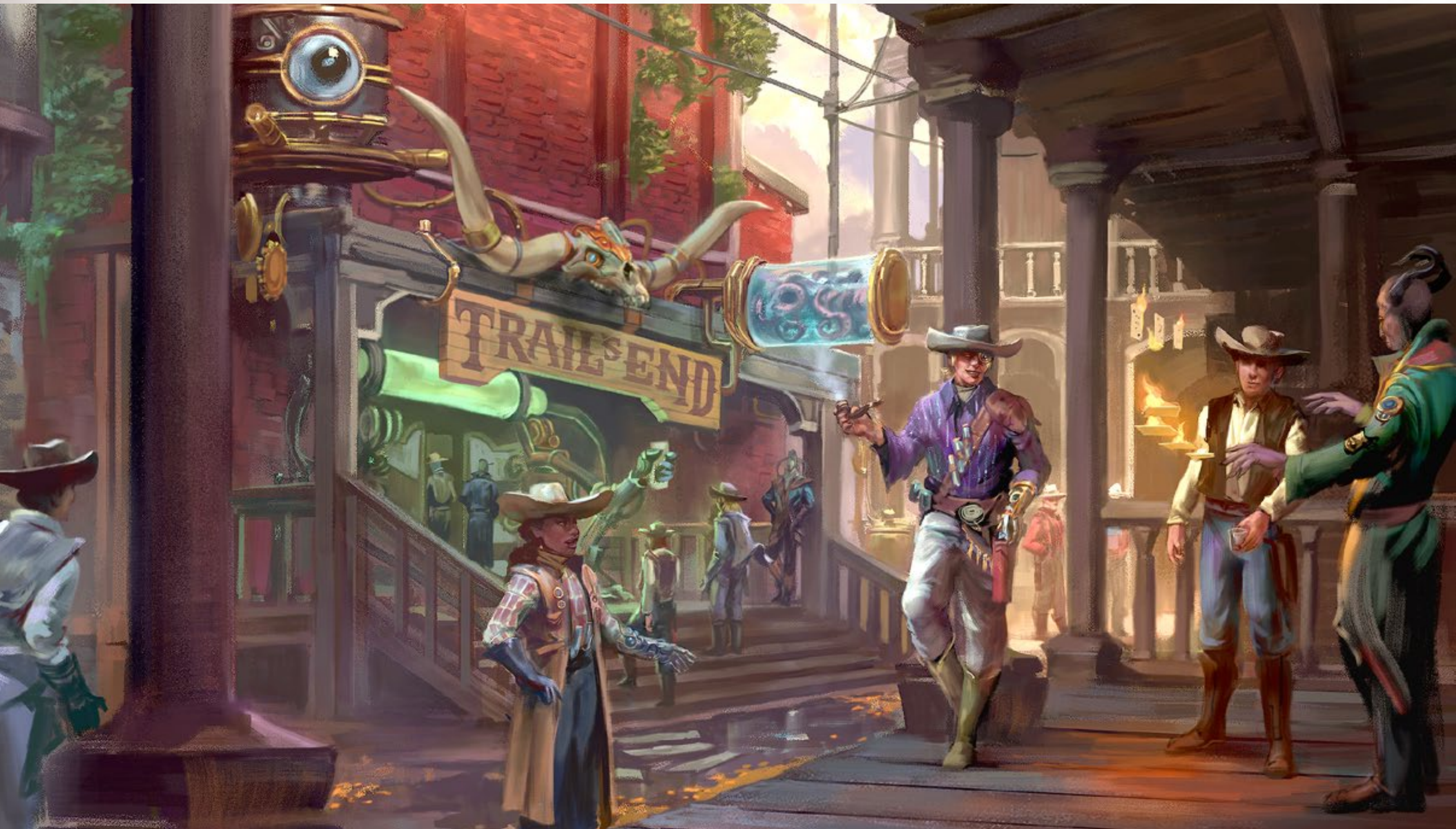
That said, there's a handbell on the bar. If someone rings it, patrons cheer, as it means the bell ringer has just promised a free round for everyone in the place. The bell is usually rung by a stardust prospector who just struck it rich, or by someone looking to celebrate something, or maybe make an announcement. (Generally speaking, the cost will be expensive to whoever pays the bar tab.)

If PCs are up for a game, several tables in Trail's End host ongoing and pick-up poker, usually for an ante of just a few feathers (inexpensive). 'Course, there's a back room where higher-stakes games happen, if participants are willing to pay the expensive cost for renting it by the day. Sometimes the gambler Edwin Hale plays in the back room, but more often he's out front making his living at the tables containing more easily bluffed gamblers.

PCs are likely to meet many other colorful characters in the cantina at different times/during different visits, having a drink with a friend, playing the tables, or pursuing their own business. Other NPCs mentioned as working in the Midnight city center also number among the clientele.

Sometimes even more colorful folk come to town, as introduced in Other Poker Players, part of the adventure "Five Card Fiasco."

The thing about the Trail's End Cantina is that there's always something unusual going on; see the Uncanny Saloons table for inspiration.



(7) MILLIE'S BOARDING HOUSE AND THEATER

This series of connected buildings contains a boarding house and theater.

The boarding house part of the complex has many rooms, all cramped with scant furnishings. But they're perfect for visitors who can't afford the Midnight Grand Hotel. Aunt Millie runs the place, collecting weekly rent of $1 (inexpensive) from boarders. Millie is a no-nonsense manager in her healthy mid-sixties who's usually in her office going over the books.

According to longtime boarders, Millie never lets room 209 because it's haunted by something especially vile and dangerous.

The theater is almost always running a nightly entertainment—a play from a traveling troupe, a performance by the town orchestra (made up of locals, including Bess Goldenhand, who plays a mean violin), lectures given by traveling essayists, and so on.

(8) MIDNIGHT JAILHOUSE AND SHERIFF'S OFFICE

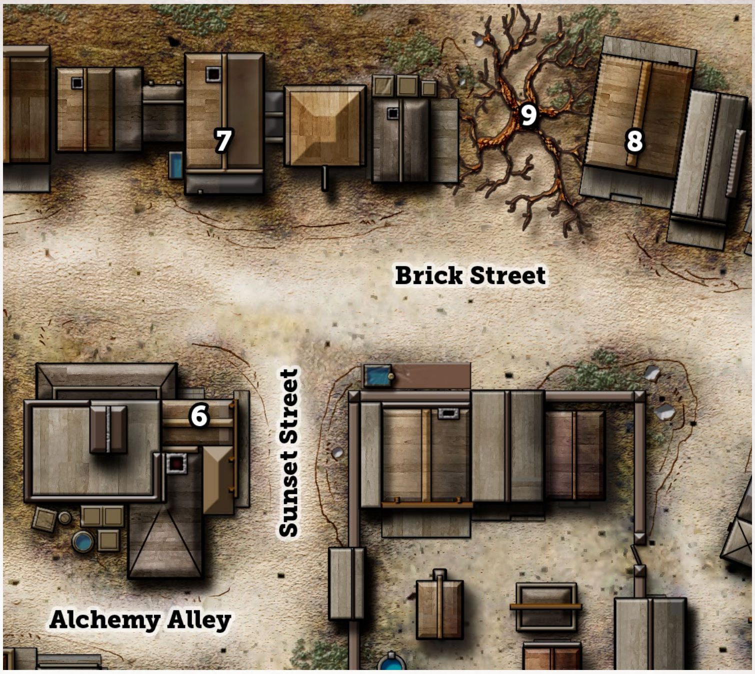
Unlike most small-town jails, this one is newly renovated, having moved from a smaller, more makeshift location near the edge of town. Town elders moved it with the idea that prominently displaying it—and the nearby hanging tree (9)— might help keep the wilder elements under control.

PCs hopefully only come to the jail for business with Sheriff Winthrop or to speak with a prisoner being held in one of the dozen barred cells, as opposed to being brought in as prisoners themselves. Many of the cells have small, barred windows that look out onto the alley to the west, but hardly anyone likes the view.

Wanted signs are posted both outside and inside the office. Some depict everyday scoundrels. Others among those who're wanted are especially formidable and strange. One or two could be those featured in *Wanted: Hexed or Alive*.

Usually, a couple of deputies are also on duty. A lawyer might also be visiting a potential client in their cell—usually Kammer or Grieve.

There's always something going on at the jailhouse; look for inspiration on the Uncanny Jails table.



(9) DEADMAN'S TREE

Tucked back into a bricked-off alley next to the jail, the Deadman's Tree is an unwelcome sight. Twisted and oozing odious fluids, the tree's claw-like branches are festooned with nooses. Sometimes one dangles a recently dead outlaw sentenced in the nearby courthouse to death by hanging.

No executioner is employed in Midnight; the tree takes care of death sentences itself, following instructions given it from duly designated sheriffs and deputies. So it only snaps a noose around the necks of those a jury of their peers has convicted of something terrible enough to deserve death.

Stories suggest the tree might be a necrovore, or maybe a dead tree haunted by a ghost, or an undead entity in its own right. Talk is that sometimes prisoners in the jail next door with windows that look out on the tree have horrifying dreams of the tree reaching through to get them, conviction or no.

Whether any of that's true or not, the Deadman's Tree does sometimes uproot itself in the middle of the night, shuffle out of town, and head into the nearby badlands for several days. No one knows why.

Aunt Millie: *level 2, boarding house tasks as level 4*

Town Jail and Sheriff's Office, page 42

Deadman's Tree: *level 5; clawed branch attacks twice per round; targets hit twice are inserted into a noose and dangled by their neck, descending one step on the damage track each round thereafter until they can escape*

Sheriff Winthrop, page 156

Barred cells: *level 6*

Who's Wanted?, page 34

Wanted: Hexed or Alive *is our zine that accompanied the publication of* High Noon at Midnight.

Deputy: *level 2; health 9; long-range pistol attack deals 4 damage*

Kammer and Grieve at Law, page 163

Uncanny Jails, page 42

OTHER MIDNIGHT CITY CENTER LOCATIONS

Other interesting and important locations in the city center include the following.

(10) Midnight Courthouse: The city elders—a council of elected citizens, only some of whom are actually all that old—meet here once a month. Otherwise, trials are held in the main courtroom most days, overseen by Judge Isaac Stone, known as the "Hanging Judge of Midnight," a title that is more flavor than truthful.

Judge Isaac Stone: *level 3, detects lies as level 6*

(11) Elixir Emporium: For the best quality alchemical rounds, advice, or custom needs, PCs know (or are told, if they're not from Midnight) to talk to Ainsley Yang, the proprietor. Besides signage indicating alchemical goods, one placard reads "Power Words Bought Here, No Questions Asked."

Mox Sisters' General Store, page 159

Ainsley Yang, page 157

The interior smells of peppermint oil and lightning and is closely packed with vials, tinctures, dusts, potions, figures, books, and more. At any given time, a handful of specific alchemical rounds are for sale; each costs about $100 (expensive) and are all about level 3. If PCs are looking for something in particular, Ainsley may take the order for half down, and have it ready within a few days for pickup.

Moon Crystal, page 177

Moon, page 175

Alchemical rounds, page 129

Lots of other stuff is on sale that isn't strictly magical, but is nonetheless interesting, as noted under The Alchemist Shop section in Part 1.

The Alchemist Shop, page 44

A couple of other, less accomplished alchemists keep their own much smaller shops nearby. The goods they sell are cheaper, both in price and in quality.

(12) Alchemetorium: Lectures are held in this grand university-esque structure three times a week, and alchemical lab benchwork is proctored on alternate days, save for when the students—about six per semester, identifiable by their striped green and white cloaks—are ushered out due to a magical mishap. The teachers include a couple of elderly alchemists, but sometimes Ainsley Yang steps in, especially when it comes to talking about how one goes about creating a forgeborn.

Alchemist, page 78

But even Ainsley is a novice when her skill is compared to a handful of legendary alchemists, like John Loomis the Watertown Warlock, whose varied creations were always incredibly powerful.

Alice Raze: *level 4, positive social interaction as level 6; touch stuns demons for one round*

(13) Iron Nail Market: This partly open-air market sells anything and everything from many dozens of temporary stalls and permanent storefronts located inside the attached structures. A good quarter of what's on sale is food of some sort, giving the place the feel of a fairground. And indeed, sometimes harmonica players, guitar players, and other performers set up in one corner or the other.

Even the Mox Sisters sometimes shop here if they're looking for more exotic things like chupacabra hide lamps, exotic silks from across the Great Eastern Sea, fry bread, intricate woven rugs and beadwork, and so much more.

The thing the Iron Nail Market is known for (aside from iron nails) is its supply of moon crystal, quarried from the actual Moon, supposedly by "moon people." (The average person in The Ghost Range has heard stories about people on the Moon who've lived there since before The Ghost Range existed, but that's about it.)

(14) Gunfighters' Wax Museum of Fame: This attraction costs just one half-eagle (inexpensive) to enter. Inside is a range of uncannily realistic wax figures depicting the most famous gunfighters of the past few hundred years, including Darcy Coal, Caleb Whistler, Belle Ryder "The Prairie Huntress," and dozens more.

Sometimes, small groups of these same wax figures are seen wandering about town in the darkest hours before dawn. Folks say it's better to just let them be.

(15) Crossroads Chapel: At the junction of Saloon Row and Market Street, the Crossroads Chapel offers a place for a bit of reflection, maybe some solace and comfort, and definitely a sense of community from like-minded folks whose excesses in drink, trade, gunplay, and other pursuits have left them open to demonic influence. And if nothing else, the fiery preacher Alice Raze always treats those who attend her weekly sermons to coffee and candied mushrooms afterward.

(16) High Plains Schoolhouse: Mr. Henry and his staff teach kids from ages seven to thirteen the basics of reading, writing, history, math, and—for those that have the aptitude—beginner's alchemy, gunplay, and exorcism.

(17) Brinkley House: This deluxe mansion was built by Abner Brinkley, a famously rich prospector who later served as mayor of Midnight for many years. In the decades since Brinkley's death, his extended family have kept up the place. Being asked to a dinner, party, or other activity over at the Brinkley House is considered quite the coup for most citizens in Midnight.

There's always at least one Brinkley on the council of elders—the current one being Maggie Brinkley, who never goes anywhere without her pet cat, Mustang, who sports a turquoise-studded collar.

(18) Lem's Saloon: The most well-known bar on Saloon Row, Lem's claim to fame is the twice-weekly shooting contests held at a range just across the Saddle River. Each competitor must pay an entrance fee of $10 (moderately priced). First prize for the winner varies, depending on how many competitors participated, but is usually at least $100 (expensive), plus a few saloon tokens worth a bottle of whiskey each.

(19) Kammer and Grieve at Law: Need to claw back a debt someone owes you? Maybe someone's talking shit about you that just ain't true, and you'd like them to stop. Could be you're worried about who's gonna get all your stuff when you shuffle off this mortal coil. Or maybe your partner is locked up in jail and could use some competent representation to argue their case before the judge. Kammer and Grieve, well-heeled gentlemen known for smoking expensive cigars, may be the lawyers for you. Consultations are free!

(20) McQuade's Undertaking: The city undertaker is easily identifiable by all the coffins out front. Daniel McQuade, in his solemn black coat and tall hat, offers package burials or coffins à la carte. A good many of the graves in the Midnight Graveyard west of town are furbished with McQuade-built coffins. McQuade keeps odd hours, and only does business after dark.

Kammer and Grieve: *level 3 (each), law and persuasion tasks as level 5*

Maggie Brinkley: *level 3, persuasion and deception as level 5*

Use vampire stats for Daniel McQuade.

Vampire, page 362

Vampire, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 62*

Tombstone Tors, page 167

Ilu, page 149

(21) Claim Office: Prospectors have struck it rich in the nearby Tombstone Tors. Minerals are fine finds, and sedimentary stardust is even better. But the most lucrative claims are for caches of weird Ilu artifacts, assuming the sites are not proscribed zones (or if they are, that information isn't mentioned). Such finds can be registered here. Once registered, it's illegal for someone else to extract riches from the area. Alternatively, a claim owner can sell it to the highest bidder.

(22) House of Joy: Midnight's premiere joy house is at least as much a saloon and gambling hall, but also includes opportunities for retaining a companion for an hour or a night, for conversation or more intimate encounters, assuming the companion likes the company on offer.

(23) Midnight Post Office: For a moderate cost, letters and small parcels can be sent across The Ghost Range and places beyond, or even across the Great Eastern Sea—though there's no guarantee the delivery will be quick, or succeed.

MIDNIGHT RUMORS AND OPPORTUNITIES

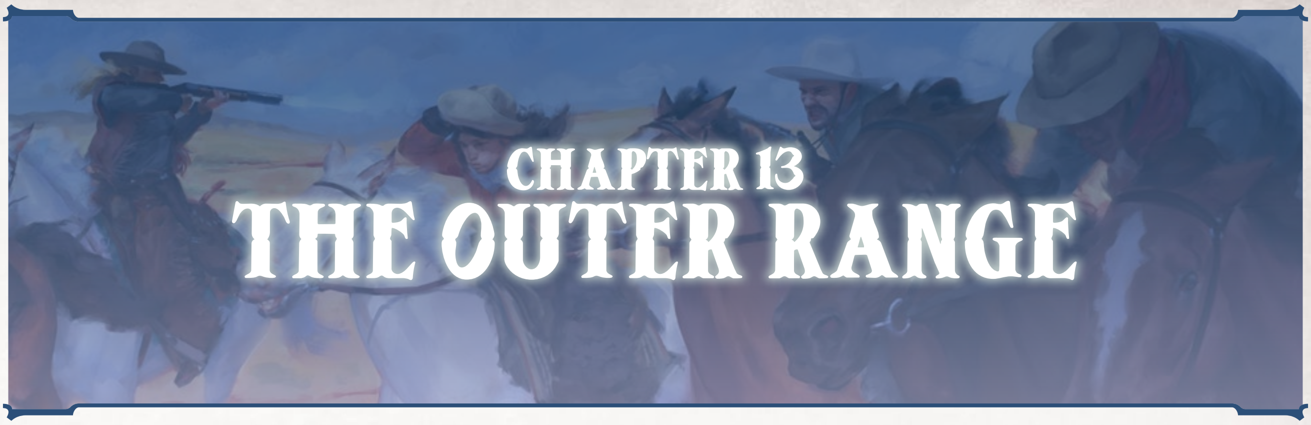
Missing Marshal: A much-beloved fixture around Midnight and the greater Ghost Range was a fella by the name of Gideon Clay, a Marshal on the Range. Marshal Clay went missing after tracking a demon-possessed outlaw called Boone into a "dark forest." Thing is, no one has found either the forest or Clay since.

Strange Package: A crate secured by rusted chains was delivered to the Midnight Post Office, with a faded postmark apparently from the very same post office, seventy-five years earlier. The recipient's name can no longer be read, but something about the way the box shudders and hisses in the night has the postmaster eager to make the package someone else's problem.

Graveyard Seep: A red, oily fluid seeps from the graveyard west of Midnight into the Saddle River. The fluid is having an adverse effect on fish in the river and some who drink from it. Sourcing the leak to a particular grave or mausoleum is becoming a priority in town.

Dustfall Excursion: The alchemist Ainsley Yang is putting together an expedition to a secret location where she predicts a particularly large dustfall, and is taking applications for associates to take part in the lucrative collection and help stave off dangers along the way.

10:17: Folks have taken to making themselves scarce when the 10:17 rolls into the Ridgeline Rail Depot located north of town. The slow hiss of steam and the tick-ticking of the boiler sound almost like a real train, but with a sinister edge. No one ever gets off, and after a few minutes, the train leaves the station for parts unknown. Except once, a fella did disembark: a gunslinger with no skin who then later disappeared, according to the lone witness's report.



CHAPTER 13
THE OUTER RANGE

"Governance" of The Outer Range is mostly on the level of individual towns, mines, ranches, and homesteads. Midnight (mostly) keeps the peace with a locally elected sheriff, courthouse, and laws passed by their council of elders. Other places have less formal arrangements, though may still have sheriffs and such if large enough. Each location faces its own unique challenges because isolation is a common problem, given the geography of wide prairielands, mountains, deserts, and badlands comprising the region. Even so, few communities refuse if a marshal takes an interest in their welfare. Those without the stubborn streak that typifies many in the territory may even seek out a marshal if things become dire enough and there's time and opportunity to do so.

MARSHALS ON THE RANGE

An organization comprised of self-described "marshals" (formally, Ghost Range Marshals) balance the scales of justice wherever they roam. They work with towns and smaller communities to stamp out outlaws, necrovores, demons, cursed beasts, and more. Other times, they've got to work against townsfolk who've become corrupted or who've decided to turn a blind eye to what's right. (For instance, they're fit to be tied about the Ghost Accords in Midnight and some other towns.)

Just a few dozen marshals are spread thinly across the territory—and sometimes to regions beyond if they're specifically invited, or tracking a target who's fled The Ghost Range. So running into a marshal is by no means guaranteed.

Marshal Susanah Hawkwind: Thin and tall, gray-haired but sturdy as a tree, Marshal Susanah Hawkwind is one of the better-known marshals. Tall tales are told of her exploits. She might be the one who shows up when things seem dire. She could also be the one to swear in those who truly want to dedicate themselves to the Ghost Range Marshals.

Marshal Susanah Hawkwind: *level 5, initiative as level 7; Armor 1; long-range bow attack deals 6 damage (or 8 damage with eased attack if she attacks before her foe); every hit increases damage by 1 point for the rest of the encounter (to a maximum of +10)*

Tall Tales, page 63

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: Star with alchemical symbols at points

Motto: Justice, Integrity, Perseverance

Badge of Membership: Silver badge in shape of the Ghost Range Marshal's symbol with inscribed name

Membership Benefits: Marshals have an asset for interaction tasks when dealing with folks (and intelligent creatures) who recognize their authority.

In addition, in lieu of taking a new skill, marshals can have their badge alchemically transmuted—by a pre-authorized alchemist (such as Ainsley Yang). The transmuted badge allows a marshal to psychically alert any other marshals in the surrounding 30-mile (48 km) area. The alert transmits the alerting badge's location to others in range, but no other information. Even if there are any other marshals in range, it may take them up to a day to respond.

Ainsley Yang, page 157

Ghost Accords, page 145

ACROSS THE OUTER RANGE

Midnight, page 154

Though Midnight claims the title of most well-known town in The Ghost Range, the rest of the territory—sometimes called "The Outer Range" by folks in Midnight—is wide and varied, full of opportunity, wonder, and, of course, danger for any pilgrim born under an unlucky star.

HELLSCRAMBLE BARRENS (BADLANDS)

Cursed beasts, page 79

These twisted, sun-scorched peaks hide shadowed gulches and knife-sharp rock formations, and as such, ain't fit for regular man or beast. Even so, both test themselves, and often enough come short, as demonstrated by the bleached bones that result. And there's cursed beasts aplenty.

Outlaws, page 35

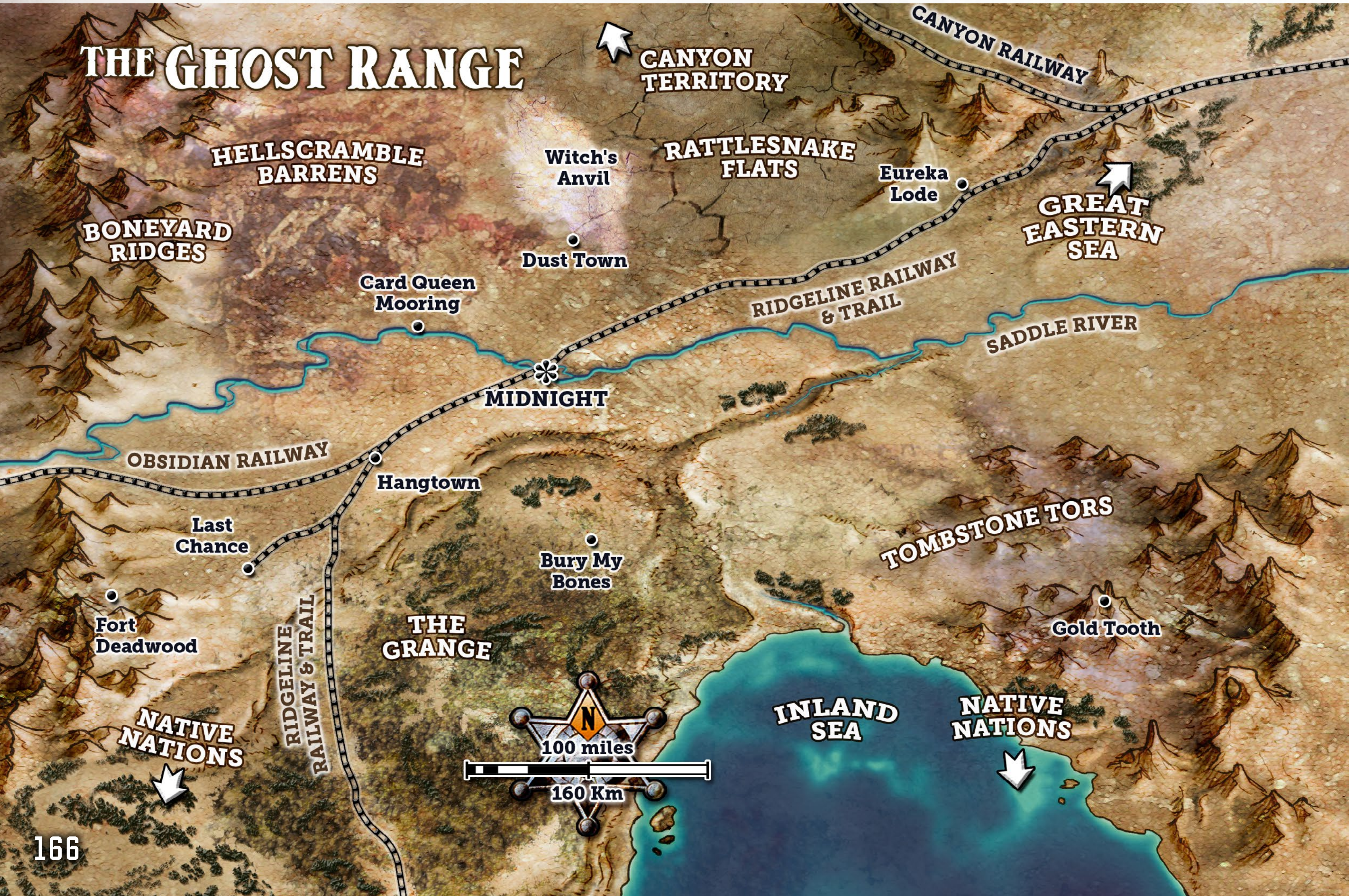
Weird Badlands Features, page 47

Routes have been charted through the Devil's Hellscramble, but it's easy to get lost in the maze of gullies, ravines, and canyons carved by erosion and who knows what else. Besides outlaws and spirits of those who got lost and never left, the Hellscramble is known for weird badlands features and as the possible location of the Bones of the Prophesized Walker.

Bones of the Prophesized Walker: Legend has it that a divine being once walked The Ghost Range, bequeathing miracles to the needy. But as they say, no good deed goes unpunished: a cursed gunslinger with a mystical bullet gunned the entity down. The body was buried in an unmarked grave somewhere in the badlands. In the centuries since, the lore of the "Bones of the Prophesized Walker" has grown. Supposedly, someone finding them could ask for a miracle.

RIDGELINE RAILWAY & TRAIL

Train tracks (and often enough, a rideable trail alongside them) give quicker and safer access to some parts of the territory, and to lands beyond. In fact, one could follow them all the way to the port on the Great Eastern Sea, north to Canyon Territory, and west to


THE GHOST RANGE
CANYON TERRITORY
CANYON RAILWAY
HELLSCRAMBLE BARRENS
Witch's Anvil
RATTLESNAKE FLATS
Eureka Lode
GREAT EASTERN SEA
BONEYARD RIDGES
Dust Town
Card Queen Mooring
RIDGELINE RAILWAY & TRAIL
SADDLE RIVER
MIDNIGHT
OBSIDIAN RAILWAY
Hangtown
Last Chance
TOMBSTONE TORS
Bury My Bones
Fort Deadwood
RIDGELINE RAILWAY & TRAIL
THE GRANGE
Gold Tooth
INLAND SEA
NATIVE NATIONS
NATIVE NATIONS
N
100 miles
160 Km

the Boneyard Ridges. The city of Midnight enjoys a station along the railway, as do some smaller communities.

The main tracks were laid down more than a century ago by a mining magnate who has long since gone bankrupt and been forgotten by history. These days, train lines on the tracks are owned and operated by various individual trading and mining cooperatives, plus a few other associations, including a shipping and passenger line called Iron Horse Express. One never knows what's on the train steaming across the prairie.

Rail Riders: Paid by those operating trains to keep the tracks clear, the bridges in good repair, and outlaws to a minimum, the Rail Riders are an independent group that demands a toll of a few eagles (a moderate expense) from strangers they find on the trail alongside the tracks. Rumor has it they are open to negotiating with outlaws planning rail heists, too, if the price is right.

TOMBSTONE TORS

Temperamental and brooding, these flatiron-like peaks stand in jumbled majesty, their tops sometimes caught in flashing storm clouds. Some say these mountains are named because of their resemblance to grave markers. Others say they're named on account of the many lives lost by prospectors and other travelers attempting to cross them. If some scoundrel broke into the locked files secured in Midnight's claim office, they'd find hundreds of mostly defunct—plus a few active and pending—claims dotted throughout the region.

Mountaineers face all kinds of dangers, including the cold, risk of avalanche, the possibility of uncanny mountain features, and a potential run-in with "hungry" ghosts.

Cannibal Ghosts: The "Whistler Party" was the name of a group of prospectors who got lost in a snowstorm, then trapped by the resultant early arrival of winter in the Tombstone Tors. When their food ran out, they turned on each other. The last survivor turned on themself. The resulting cannibal ghosts are not spirits anyone wants to encounter. Thankfully, most people only ever hear their hungry screams echoing among the peaks from far away.

RATTLESNAKE FLATS (DESERT)

This shimmering sea of heat and dunes is occasionally broken by craggy outcrops, mesas, and much-sought-after shadowed canyons. Cacti of various types stand like lone sentinels, and tumbleweeds spin at the vanguard of choking dust storms that appear without warning. Yet life persists in these wastes, including lizards, pocket mice, hawks, and snakes. *So* many snakes, the venomous rattler among them. And not a few cursed beasts.

Those attempting to cross face a host of possible life-ending scenarios, including the aforementioned rattler, dehydration from the intense heat, and a variety of unexpected and uncanny desert features.

Sandstorms: In the Rattlesnake Flats, sandstorms seem to blow in out of nowhere, arriving as a wall of blinding, blowing sand that encompasses everything for hours at a time. Inside a sandstorm, it's easy to get lost—all perception, navigation, and tracking tasks are hindered by four steps. Many groups and lone travelers have disappeared without a trace into the maw of these howling storms.

Riders braving the Rattlesnake Flats have two additional threats to contend with. The first is undead dunes called tombdrifts.

The second threat is the all-too-real legend of a heartsick wanderer's search for her lover's mortal remains. All she has to guide her is her lover's severed unquiet hand.

THE GRANGE (PRAIRIELAND)

The rumpled green blanket of The Grange is often a respite for those who've been traveling through badlands, mountains, and deserts. However, the tallgrass, deep lakes, and sometimes roaring rivers can become threats to those all alone on the prairie. One never knows when a weird prairielands feature will turn from intriguing to terrifying.

Other notable features of The Grange include bison herds and all the lakes, including the enormous freshwater Inland Sea.

Thunderherd: Bison herds sometimes darken The Grange, but one bison grouping in particular, called Thunderherd, is more likely than others to stampede *toward* intruders, whether they're lone travelers or

Rattlesnake: *level 2; venomous bite attack eased, deals 3 Speed damage (ignores armor) for three rounds*

What's on the Train, page 32

Rail Rider: *level 3; moves a long distance each round on horseback; long-range pistol attack deals 4 damage*

Dehydration, page 49

Too Hot, page 49

Uncanny Desert Features, page 49

Tombdrift, page 93

Claim Office, page 164

Unquiet Hand in the Sand, page 168

Too Cold, page 52

Avalanche, page 52

Uncanny Mountain Features, page 52

Weird Prairielands Features, page 48

Ghost, page 331

Ghost, Cypher System Bestiary, page 44

Cannibal ghost: *ghost stats, plus ghost gains 2 extra (or regains 2 lost) health with each bite of target*

Difficult Terrain, page 224

Grizzly bull, page 79

part of a larger company. A stampede moves a long distance each round for several minutes, and in the tallgrass (difficult terrain for anything but Thunderherd), it's hard to flee an approaching threat. Each character enveloped by a stampede suffers 3 points of damage, and on a failed difficulty 3 Speed defense roll, descends one step on the damage track as they are borne along for a while and separated from their allies. At least one of those separated finds themself face to face with the head of Thunderherd, a grizzly bull with glowing silver streaks in their fur called Ankta.

Demon, page 322

Demon, Cypher System Bestiary, page 54

Rampagion, page 338

Inland Sea: Wide and unbelievably deep, the Inland Sea is largely free of lakeside communities and boat travel, despite being full of fish and other wildlife. Those who ignore the rumors of a vengeful lake monster and build along the shore or send a craft across the water may discover that they should've listened when Rampagion, a red-horned aquatic monstrosity, surfaces. Travelers and community builders may get lucky and avoid Rampagion's notice for weeks or months, but eventually, the gargantuan monster rises and wreaks havoc.

TOWNS, FORTS, MINES, AND MORE

A traveler could spend years riding The Ghost Range and still find some new uncanny feature past the next sunset.

FORT DEADWOOD

This old fort once housed a small cavalry of soldiers assembled and trained by General Bridger, a long-dead warlord who tried to take The Ghost Range for himself. Long abandoned and tumbledown, the buildings behind the fort's petrified log walls haven't been claimed by outlaws or others because of all the damn demons infesting the place. Many buildings yet contain alchemical ordnance and weaponry. And probably interesting historical and sorcerous records . . .

Perdition's founding—granting the demons of Hell a foothold in our world—was the consequence of a powerful, mystical invitation made by General Bridger. The General hoped such an alliance would ensure his conquest. For his trouble, Hell betrayed him. His dead corpse (level 5) still walks about the fort, puppeteered by the latest in a long series of demonic possessors.

RUMORS AND OPPORTUNITIES OUT ON THE RANGE

Cure All: Out on The Grange, an uncannily red rattlesnake bit a marshal named Bone Trigger. Bone Trigger didn't die of the snake bite, as was foretold when he was age three. Taking this as a sign that his purpose was not yet fulfilled, he now wanders deserts and prairies offering antivenom—and other aid—to those in need.

Unquiet Hand in the Sand: Elsa Middleton carries an animate hand that she believes is possessed by the spirit of her dead lover Samantha. The hand can point and sign (and strangle), and Elsa believes it is leading her, by a circuitous route, to the place where the rest of Sam's remains can be found and properly laid to rest. Observers aren't so sure—it's also possible the hand is actually leading Elsa through The Ghost Range on a never-ending spree of death and mayhem.

Train Wreck: An engine and most of its cars has derailed somewhere along the Ridgeline Railway. It's not clear whether outlaws are to blame or if it was an accident. A posse from Last Chance is riding out to investigate. Half want to save any survivors. The other half want to loot and pillage the wrecked cars and engine, survivors be damned.

Bone Trigger: *level 4, initiative as level 7; health 18; Armor 1; long-range tomahawk attack deals damage or restores health (and removes lingering effects of poison and venom) as Bone Trigger chooses*

Animate hand: *level 4, Speed defense as level 6 due to size; squeezing/strangling attack deals 5 damage each round until target can escape; regains 2 health each round even if destroyed unless rest of the remains are found and burned*

HANGTOWN

Hangtown's claim to fame is that it's where the famous outlaw Wayne "Bloodshot" Cassidy was finally brought to justice and hanged. A plaque at the city center memorializes the event. Other attractions include a couple of saloons, a boarding house that serves "the best tamales around," and a nearby kangaroo ranch where specially trained and amazingly fierce "flyers" and "boomers" (female and male kangaroos, respectively) are available as mounts to the discerning buyer.

Hangtown is also home to Quetzal and Cottrill, a couple of bounty hunters that always seem to know where their quarry has gone to ground. (They also both ride boomers.)

LAST CHANCE

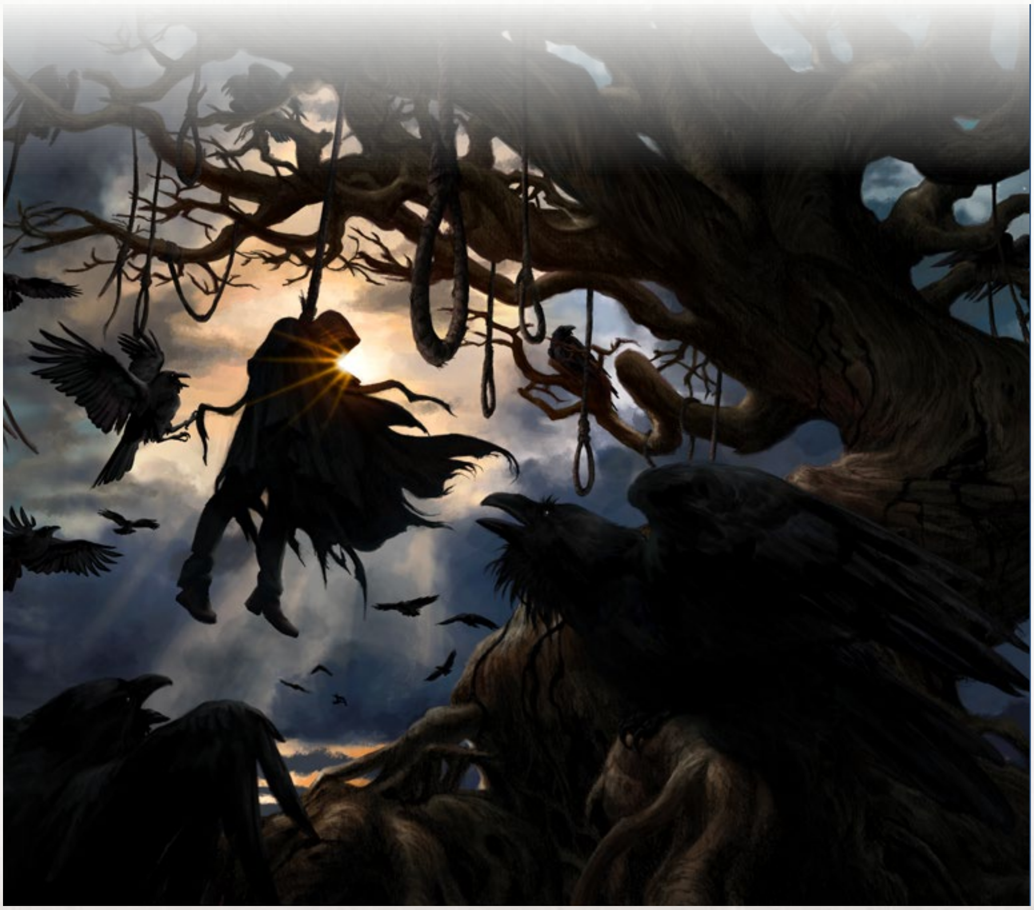
Last Chance was settled when a runaway train accidentally detoured down an abandoned rail spur, then derailed. Its surviving stranded passengers used the cars and the engine as the foundational structures of their new city, giving the place a unique look. Instead of a city hall clock or bell tower, for instance, the Last Chance town hall blows a deafening train whistle.

There's no sheriff or deputy in Last Chance, but a group called the Patrol has a similar role, protecting the town from outlaws, cattle rustlers, cursed beasts, and renegade alchemists. However, there's reasonable evidence that the Patrol is every bit as compromised as any outlaw gang; the Patrol is just better organized and a known quantity. Last Chance citizens are willing to put up with graft and protection fees in return for a promise of safety from all the other threats the nearby wilderness contains.

GOLD TOOTH

An odd geological formation resembling a lone, mesa-sized, gold-colored tooth rises up from the surrounding tors. People live along the base of the tooth, clambering in and out of small holes in the mesa's side almost like termites. They look human enough, but these so-called "gold diggers" act like insects, with almost as little regard for their own personal safety and needs as ants. They even wear exoskeleton-like armor made of bones, both animal and human. Their speech is understandable, but always in a whisper. They rarely remove their skull-like masks except in the darkness of their burrow—before their whispered queen, called by outsiders the Queen in Gold.

Sometimes a gold digger is sent by the queen to acquire needful things for the community, which might include medicines, pottery, and always at least a dozen barrels of syrup.



Quetzal and Cottrill: *level 4, other tasks (including tracking, attacks, and defense) as level 8 if working together on the same task*

Gold digger: *level 3; Armor 2*

Queen in Gold: *level 6; Armor 2; uses psychic abilities with options for dealing damage to many foes in a short area with biting insects, commanding (or befriending) insectile creatures, and summoning powerful insect allies (level 5)*

Proscribed Zones, page 150

Melisandre Kent, alchemist, page 78

Hollister Quin: *level 4; long-range pistol attack*

BURY MY BONES

Those who founded what was first called Green Acres didn't realize they'd sited their town smack dab on top of a proscribed zone. A couple of years later, the disappearances started, along with horrible dreams by townspeople. The other shoe didn't drop until a mission out of lands under Native Nations sovereignty arrived in Green Acres and pointed out all the other hallmarks of a proscribed zone, including the half-buried warning markers and centuries-old banned trailblazes that the settlers had ignorantly ignored.

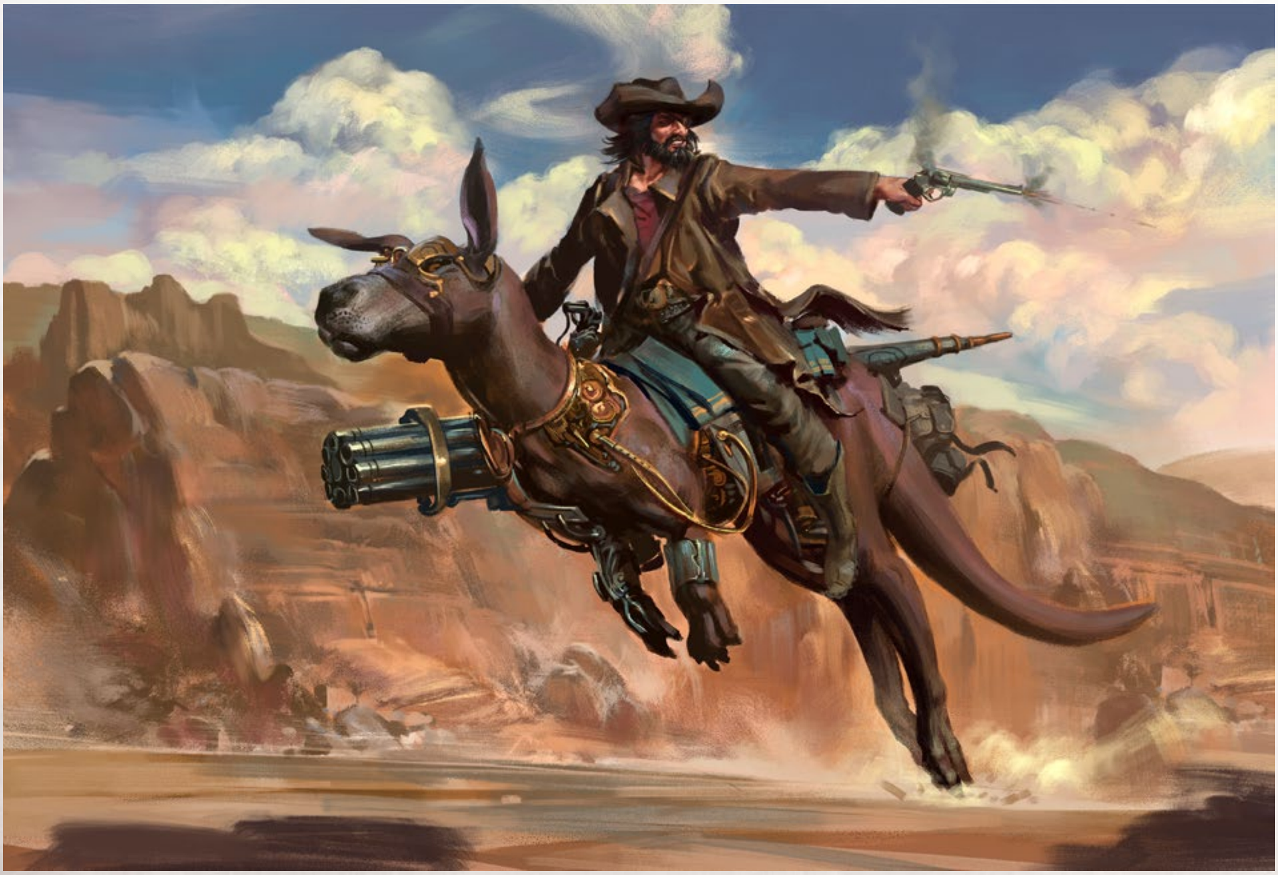
Some Green Acres citizens were smart enough to listen to the mission's warning, and emigrated to some other part of the range. Most of those that didn't were pulled down below by inscrutable forces within another couple of years. Only a few raving diehards remain in town, all of them wild-eyed over their latest nightmare or waking vision of horror.

The town came to be called Bury My Bones and is mostly shunned. Widow's Watch, a ranch with a boarding house, is located about a mile out of town.

EUREKA LODE

This small mining community long prospered from the silver and gold produced by the nearby mine. It even supports a theatre far more elaborate than a town of its size could normally hope for. But Eureka Lode has lately run on hard times as mineral production declines. An alchemist named Melisandre Kent promised to restore the mine's bounty, but ended up further degrading the situation when something interfered with her ritual. Now a silvery haze fills the dig.

Miners who've ventured back underground find their vision of the tunnels doubling and tripling, as if they're seeing into multiple similar mines simultaneously. Deep, throaty screams echoing down the mine shafts eventually chase everyone out before their shifts end. Most assume that a proscribed zone was breached by the alchemist's magic. But the town mayor, Hollister Quin, holds out hope that something else is to blame. Something that can be found and dealt with. Because if it's actually a proscribed zone, the town's days are numbered.



MORE RUMORS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Widow's Cellar: Just outside of Bury My Bones, the Widow Jenkins offers boarding and simple fare in return for doing some work around her ranch. However, what she really needs help with is clearing out her cellar, where her collection of pickled root vegetables has somehow gained a slimy, oozing life. Most of the collection is still jarred, but is easily roused by light or movement.

Iron Hill: Trailblazers reported finding a giant "iron hill" deep in the desert a hundred years ago. An alchemist surveyor declared the hill was actually a giant meteorite, some 400 feet (120 m) tall and 800 feet (240 m) long. A small fragment was brought back to Midnight for study, but the meteorite itself hasn't been found again since, despite the efforts of multiple expeditions, calling its very existence into question. (Or suggesting that it's able to move.) If it could be found, it might offer a portal to the dreadful moon of its origin.

Watertown: This once-booming community is now a ghost town, and that's down to the actions of the place's most famous citizen, the alchemist John Loomis. Known for his feats of forgecraft, the celebrity alchemist was also something of an outlaw. He sourced his materials from questionable purveyors, up to and including "resurrectionists." These reprobates procured bodies from graveyards, giving Loomis the human parts he needed to create a small cavalry of foul-mouthed deadshots who later went on to murder everyone in town after Loomis left to pursue new projects. The deadshot forgeborn preserved their victims' bodies with their creator's techniques, then posed them around town in a parody of real life. Newcomers that wander into Watertown face a similar fate if they can't escape.

Pole Heist: A group of enterprising outlaws, led by Tuck Balian (who dresses similarly to and has the stats of a killer clown), has innovated using long poles to vault onto moving trains, giving them a huge leg up when it comes to train robberies. A marshal in the area is looking for a few good riders to stop Tuck and his crew.

Deadshot, page 87

Killer clown (Tuck Balian, outlaw), page 339

DUST TOWN

This windswept town borders a salt flat called the Witch's Anvil where dustfalls commonly occur. The reason Dust Town isn't an alchemical mecca is down to the salt flat being far deadlier than any desert or badlands. When a dustfall is prognosticated and gatherers head out across the sere flat, they're usually never seen again. The few times gatherers do make their way back into Dust Town, they're dehydrated and raving. They tell tales of a witch with yellow eyes wearing a crusted crown of burning green salt—the Witch in Salt—who dislikes stardust "thieves" bumbling into her realm. Most intruders, she turns into pillars of salt. A few, she allows to escape—sometimes with a bag of stardust for their trouble, so long as they warn others away. For the Witch in Salt prefers her saline solitude.

CARD QUEEN

All are welcome on this riverboat casino, so long as they have money to gamble. The Card Queen is usually moored to the same place along the Saddle River, though those who fail to disembark before dawn find the boat tied up at an unfamiliar river pier fronting a town called Perdition. The casino owner, one Jon Azrakith, greets guests each night in a spotless white suit and top hat, smoking a red-tipped cigar. If he spots gamblers with any kind of reputation, or those who've developed a paranormal vice of any sort, he invites them to play at the high-rollers table in an especially swank, private section of the boat where drinks are free. There, Azrakith puts up amazing rewards (usually a pick from a selection of three or four artifacts he's collected, but a cash prize is also on the table). But those who lose to him agree to give up their souls.

Dustfalls, page 148

Witch in Salt, witch, page 368

Witch, Cypher System Bestiary, page 90

Perdition, page 172

Paranormal vice, page 65

Azrakith, demon, page 322

Azrakith, demon, Cypher System Bestiary, page 54

Artifacts, page 151

CHAPTER 14
OTHERLANDS

Other territories stretch across the same continent as The Ghost Range. The Native Nations figure most prominently. Some especially far-flung places with names like Bloodstone Flats, The Hollows, and the Great Forest lie beyond, so distant that even rangers don't roam so far. And of course there's the antiquated kingdoms and crowded states thankfully separated from right-thinking folks by the Great Eastern Sea.

But there's another class of land that gives cartographers conniptions. That's because they can't rightly be mapped, at least not without starting fresh. Collectively, they're called Otherlands.

The most notable of these are the Moon, Perdition, and the Tomb Moon.

PERDITION

The town of Perdition sprawls across a parched desert landscape. Its streets are dusty, its weather-beaten buildings are cracked and warped, and the wooden sidewalks are splintered and rotted. A single main street leads through town, fronted by the façades of luridly lit saloons, casinos, drug dens, cock- and dog-fighting rings, fences for stolen goods, and less savory attractions down dark alleys. The sun usually hangs low and red in the sky, never seeming to move, tinting everything the color of dried blood.

Industrious townsfolk bustle between the various establishments, many in dusters and spurs, others in vintage suits and bowlers, and a few in outrageous outfits suggesting they walked right out of a carnival or joy house. All, however, seem to have a cruel twist to their lips, a hard glint in their eyes, and voices that seem to resonate and buzz.

> "New fish" is a term demons use affectionately in Perdition to openly refer to newcomers to their fair city. What they actually imply by the term is that the newcomers will soon be caught and lose their flesh to some new demon.

FAÇADE OF PERDITION

Perdition pretends to be just another town on The Ghost Range, at least to visitors who find the place accidentally. Certainly that's how the townsfolk initially present themselves and the place they live. However, that façade begins to fray over several hours; if visitors are still in town 23 hours after they first arrive, the façade drops, and the newcomers become targets for demonic possession, as noted under Perils of Perdition.

REACHING PERDITION

Every few days or weeks, the red sun over Perdition finally sets, bringing unrelieved darkness for about an hour. When morning comes, a handful of unlucky travelers lost somewhere on The Ghost Range arrive down the single long road leading into town.

The circumstances by which newcomers find the road to Perdition aren't always clear, but it could be down to someone unknowingly carrying a cursed item, or someone else having had dealings with what they didn't realize was a demon. Another accidental way newcomers reach Perdition is by disembarking from the Card Queen, a riverboat on which they stayed far too long.

Fools may choose to visit the city on purpose. All they have to do is ask a demon for directions. The demon may play coy, but eventually provides verbal or written instructions, or offers to serve as a guide. Once directions are gained from a legitimate demonic source (or a guide is hired), following the directions—which can seem absurd at times, especially the part where everyone has to close their eyes and spin counterclockwise five times—eventually leads one right to the wretched town.

But sometimes, Perdition just appears somewhere in The Ghost Range as if it had always been there, along a road, rail-line, or river, during the dark of the Moon. Unless something momentous is happening, the town's usually gone by the next morning, taking everyone in it to a nether realm beneath a motionless red sun.

Leaving Perdition is accomplished the same way—either by following the directions in reverse, by following a guide, or by boarding the Card Queen before it pulls away from the pier. That is, assuming the locals let the "new fish" go so easily.

PERILS OF PERDITION

Everyone a visitor meets in Perdition is almost certainly a demon wearing stolen mortal flesh—that of a cowboy, marshal, preacher, widow, gambler, performer, courtesan, sheriff, or someone else whose soul has long vanished. Which means that no matter how well a visitor is treated, how often promises are made about one thing or another, and how lovely the food and wine served them is, it's all a lie. Demons in Perdition are drawn to fresh mortals like cattle to a newly filled trough. They come with invitations, gifts, and offers of riches or carnal companionship.

Accepting any of these isn't itself perilous—it's staying too long that'll get a fella killed. Those who spend at least 23 hours in Perdition become the target for demonic possession from uncounted disembodied demons waiting just past "Hell's Doorstep." Each time a character successfully fights off a possession attempt, they enjoy a grace period of about a minute before another demon is able to try.

In Perdition, the only thing that works in a newcomer's favor is that the demons never cooperate to keep a would-be victim bamboozled. They work at cross purposes, each hoping to be the one responsible for inducing a newcomer's possession by a fresh demon out of Hell.

If PCs accidentally find and follow a road to Perdition, it's a group GM intrusion.

The Ghost Range, page 144

Card Queen, page 171

STOLEN FLESH: LONG-TERM DEMONIC POSSESSION

Once a fella has been demon-possessed for at least 33 days, the original displaced soul is usually trapped in Hell for good—the demon has effectively stolen their body.

A demon can warp the stolen flesh it wears over time, creating a monstrosity with horns, claws, ferocious teeth, and so on. Some choose to keep the flesh as they stole it; others go hog wild.

In addition, a demon in a stolen body can return to it a few days after it's been exorcised, or revive the body and walk around in it again even if the body has been killed. Which is why smart demon hunters burn the body of someone who's been possessed for a month or more, sealing off the demon's ability to return to the World.

Notable people in Perdition: *level 5; as demons but all with physical bodies*

Demon, page 322

Demon, Cypher System Bestiary, page 54

PEOPLE OF NOTE

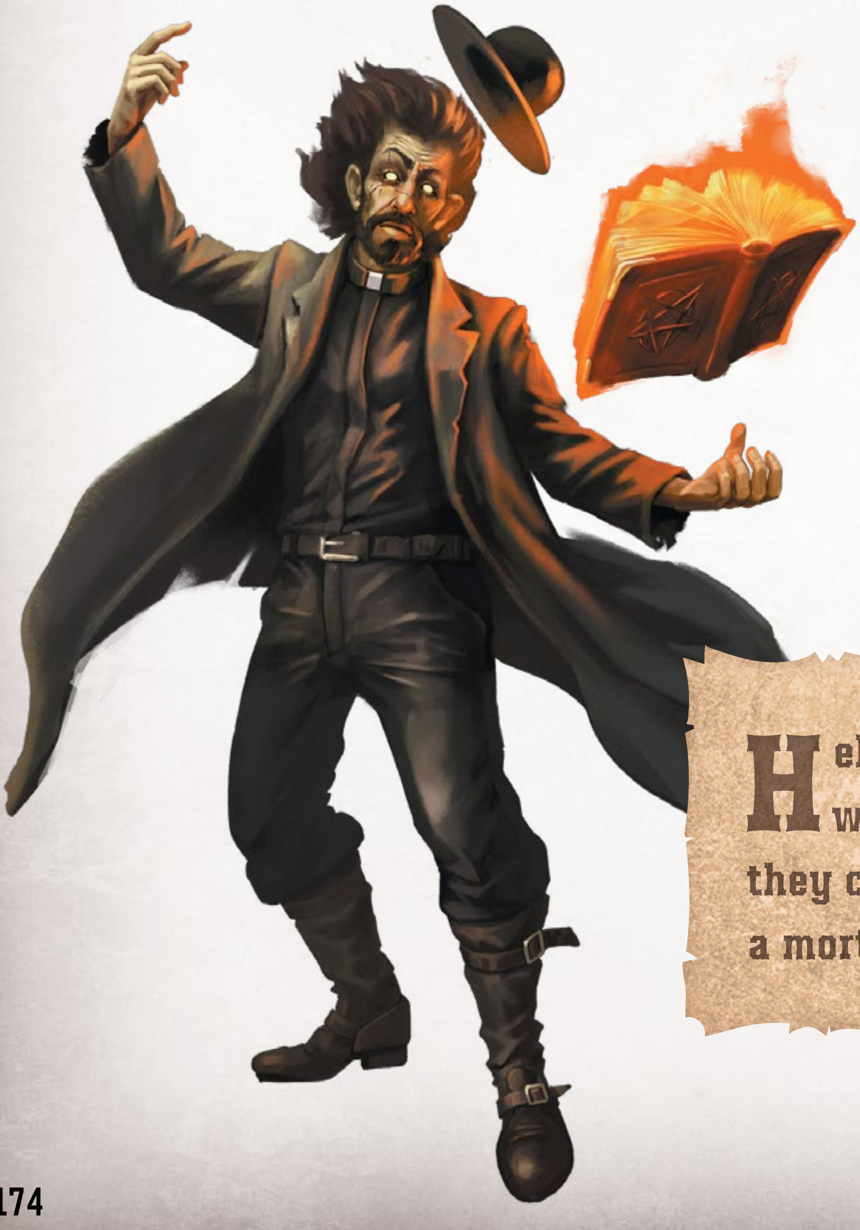
'Cept they ain't people, they're demons who've made a go at permanent possession.

Clyde Scribner: One of the first people newcomers are likely to meet is a man in slacks, shiny shoes, collared shirt, and suspenders who introduces himself as Clyde Scribner, a "newspaper man" who takes note of interesting events in town so he can write about them in the morning edition. And newcomers are (he says), if not interesting, at least diverting. He tries to steer PCs to a nearby saloon (such as the Whiskey Dick or Ragged Breath) to "interview" them, with many appreciative comments in the process, all the while plying them with liquor in hopes of inebriating them so much they fail to leave.

Alfred Cohen: Dressed in preacher's garb, Alfred doesn't let the former vocation of his stolen flesh get in the way of a hellishly grand time in Perdition. However, when he spies "new fish," his demeanor changes. He takes up the memories of the preacher whose body he wears, explaining his purpose in Perdition is to get the townsfolk to foreswear their dissolute ways. If the characters know that most people in town are demons, he quickly changes his tack, indicating he knows that—he's trying to get even a single demon to "turn to the light." If he can do that, he explains/lies, Perdition will fade away.

He asks PCs to help him talk with a couple of prospects he's been "working on," including Alina Cactus, who initially goes along with the gag in hopes of keeping PCs distracted long enough to become available for possession.

Alina Cactus: A performer at the Ragged Breath (or any number of other saloons in Perdition), Alina's voice is as captivating as her shimmery green dress is dazzling. She can sing in seemingly any style, but prefers power ballads that keep even the other demons enthralled. If PCs interact with Alina, she seems every bit the professional. If Preacher Cohen taps her into his scheme, she goes along initially, but they soon begin to squabble, because demons just can't get along.



Hell is full of demons who want out, and the only way they can escape is by providing a mortal soul to replace them.

PERDITION: HELL'S DOORSTEP

The realm of Hell lies just beyond Perdition, through a barrier thin as an onion's skin. Its influence is felt as a sickly psychic drag throughout the town. What Hell actually *is* remains a topic of debate (even among demons who've escaped), and probably varies greatly depending on the epoch. But one thing's clear: Hell is full of demons who want out, and the only way they can escape is by providing a mortal soul to replace them. Mortals who enter Perdition become primary targets—and their flesh becomes available for possession as a side benefit. But sometimes demons are able to slip formlessly out of Hell and even out of Perdition, into the mortal world, summoned by unwise alchemists or other sorcerers.

A couple of times in the last few hundred years, events in the mortal world threatened to loose all the demons of Hell, but luck, accidents, or heroes (or a combination of all three) prevented it. Most recently was when General Bridger in Fort Deadwood made a hellish alliance that thankfully fell through. But the demons of Perdition are always looking for new opportunities. As gleeful and full of sick joy as they are about their stolen bodies, they remain Hell's vanguard.

Fort Deadwood, page 168

MOON

The Moon that regularly skims the sky high above The Ghost Range is a mottled sphere of green and crystalline blue. It looks tiny and remote, but is actually a world in itself. Regular folks in The Ghost Range know that humans have lived on the Moon for time out of mind: they are the "People in the Moon."

The People in the Moon are probably descended from ancient Native Nations settlers. They took up life in the sky so long ago that little overlap remains between the two cultures, though strong respect remains. Even the People in the Moon's language has utterly diverged; Moonspeak is a distinct language all its own.

Because the Moon is a miniature world in its own right, where a newcomer first sets down determines what they'll first see and experience (though those coming through the Moon Arch described hereafter appear at the edge of the Crystal Sea). Wherever a traveler arrives, they notice a few things immediately.

Thin, Cold Air: The air is cool and thin; someone arriving directly from The Ghost Range may suffer from Moon sickness for the first couple of days until they acclimatize. Warm clothing with insulating layers is almost always necessary, even for the People in the Moon; otherwise it quickly grows too cold.

Gravity: One could jump more than 10 feet (3 m) straight up in the air on the Moon! Or broad jump over 100 feet (30 m). Amazing, but it takes a little getting used to, just like the thin air. Tasks requiring movement are hindered for several hours until a newcomer gets the hang of it. After that, they're eased.

Purple Sky: Instead of the blue sky newcomers know from the World, the Moon's sky is a deep purple color, through which stars twinkle even when the sun is high in the sky.

The World Above: The World hangs in the Moon's purplish sky like an outsized moon, a cloud-whorled marble that draws the eyes of visitors who understand that it's their home. The People in the Moon call it "the World" just like people in The Ghost Range do (but in Moonspeak), and view it without much reverence—to most, it's just a pretty sphere. The globe of the World does not rise or set—it remains essentially stationary, assuming it's visible at all; it's not visible from at least half of the Moon.

Night and Day: One day on the Moon is about two weeks long, as the sun slowly traverses the purple sky. As might be expected, night lasts the same span.

Too Cold, page 52

MOON SICKNESS

Moon sickness results in fever, headache, vomiting, and pallor, and sufferers' tasks are hindered. Newcomers already used to high altitudes on the World do not suffer from Moon sickness.

REACHING THE MOON

There's not much traffic between the Moon and the World.

Vessels: A couple of alchemists famously devised mechanisms that hurled them into the void separating the two, though they both remain missing. They either missed the Moon entirely or blew themselves to bits with the magical elixirs devised to propel their vessels to unheard-of speeds. Even so, an alchemist named Emily Wright—who keeps a ranch along the Saddle River—seems to be preparing another go at it.

Emily Wright: *alchemist stats, plus access to an alchemically fueled module potentially capable of reaching the Moon*

Alchemist, page 78

Portals: Otherwise, access between the two is mostly down to a few secret portals. One of those is a natural arch in the badlands near Midnight, referred to as the Moon Arch. Merely passing under the arch does nothing. The secret—kept by a couple of merchants who maintain a stall in the Iron Nail Market in Midnight—is that a traveler must carry a piece of moon crystal (or accompany someone carrying the same), the Moon must be full, and it must be visible in the sky. If the transfer works, the newcomers find themselves deposited along the edge of the Crystal Sea.

Iron Nail Market, page 162

Rituals: Certain individuals among the Native Nations know rituals capable of transferring celebrants to the Moon. However, these folks are disinclined to use them because of an ancient treaty with the People in the Moon. The People in the Moon want no truck with demons that the World is so sick with, and won't risk transferring any lingering influence of the Nihilal.

Returning to the World: For someone native to the World who's arrived on the Moon, returning is relatively easy, as long as one knows the secret (though it could happen accidentally). One must sleep and dream of the World. Upon waking, the traveler is back in or near their home on the World.

Obviously this doesn't work for the People in the Moon, though they know of at least one arch—like the Moon Arch, but in reverse—that allows passage to someone carrying moon crystal. Using this secret arch deposits travelers somewhere along the edge of the Inland Sea in The Ghost Range.

Inland Sea, page 168

THE PEOPLE IN THE MOON

The People in the Moon—who often just call themselves "the People"—typically wear a few woven underlayers finished by a carapace overlayer. These carapaces are harvested from the many oversized, iridescent bugs that thrive on the Moon despite the thin air. This traditional form of dress sometimes leads visitors to believe the People in the Moon are "bug people," though that misapprehension is dispelled as soon as one doffs their helm to reveal perfectly normal human features.

Like folks on the World, the People live in all sorts of different circumstances. Some are hunters and ranchers (of outsize insects), others practice magic (called lunamancy), some make their living through trade or employment, and some live outside the law. There are towns and cities on the Moon, as well as vast tracts of utterly wild land inhabited only by huge insects and luminescent flora.

A few individuals of note include the following.

Akashank: Wearing a bright blue carapace with giant moth wings, Akashank is an accomplished hunter despite being a relatively young woman. She hunts along the edges of the Crystal Sea, seeking insects called "skivern" that are valued for their sweet meat and tractable carapaces. She knows languages of the World because she's sometimes hired as a local guide by moon crystal traders from Midnight and elsewhere.

Akashank: *level 4; Armor 2; long-range sting-rifle deals 6 damage*

Skivern: *level 3, stealth as level 5; attack inflicts 3 poison damage for three rounds*

Sulendhet: A master of lunamancy, Sulendhet is always eager to meet newcomers, especially those who know alchemy or possess alchemical items, because he's interested in learning where the two traditions intersect. His deepest desire is to one day learn to create a forgeborn, though using moon crystal. But he's not so eager to learn that he's willing to compromise his ethics, especially if he suspects some sort of demonic influence is at play.

Sulendhet: *level 5; Armor 2; uses lunamancy abilities with options for dealing damage to many foes in a short area with crystal shards, flying on panes of crystal, summoning insect allies (level 4), and divining methods for travel between the World and Moon*

PLACES ON THE MOON

A dazzling array of interesting places exist both on the Moon and beneath its crust—documenting even a fraction would take many volumes. Thus, the following descriptions are both brief and barely representative of all the Moon has to offer.

The Crystal Sea: A vast, shimmering sea covers an irregular swath of the Moon's surface, though it's not composed of water, but of solidified moonlight. It's treacherous to venture too close to the sea because the reflections and refractions form magical illusions with a faux life of their own. Still, some use special tools to chip away small chunks of valuable moon crystal.

Lunar Canyons: Deep canyons on the Moon amplify sound to an incredible degree, creating a symphony of echoes from any spoken word. Whispers become roars that can echo for years or decades, giving rise to creatures made only of sound.

Luminescent Jungles: During the two-week-long night, lands on the Moon covered in fractal-shaped plants and trees light up with a neon glow, illuminating a variety of insects that only come out when the sun is down.

Moonmilk Caves: A luminescent, viscous substance called "moonmilk" pools in some caves, deposited by wormlike creatures hundreds of feet long. Moonmilk is collected by the People—though never too much at once—and is considered a nutritional staple of their diet.

MOON CRYSTAL

Moon crystal is several times harder and more resilient than iron, though working it is tricky and requires alchemy, lunamancy, or some other magic. In addition to being a useful crafting material, a raw chunk weighing at least 6 ounces (170 g) can be used to attempt to move the user one round back in time if they succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect task. On a success, the user can relive the previous round, and even change what action they took. On a failure, the user instead hops forward about a minute. For the user, no time passes, but for everyone else, the user is simply gone for about a minute. Either way, the attempt transmutes the crystal to fleeting moonlight, and the user can't attempt any more time treks for another month.

TOMB MOON

The Tomb Moon's existence might be tied to the secret of stardust.

The Secret of stardust, page 149

The Moon's sinister sibling appears rarely in the sky, and never in the same orbit. Instead, its erratic dance follows some arcane, looping route through the void that even the most venerated alchemists can't calculate. Sometimes it doesn't show up for months or even years. Other times it skims across the sky, monstrously large and close, as if promising to strike and destroy the World.

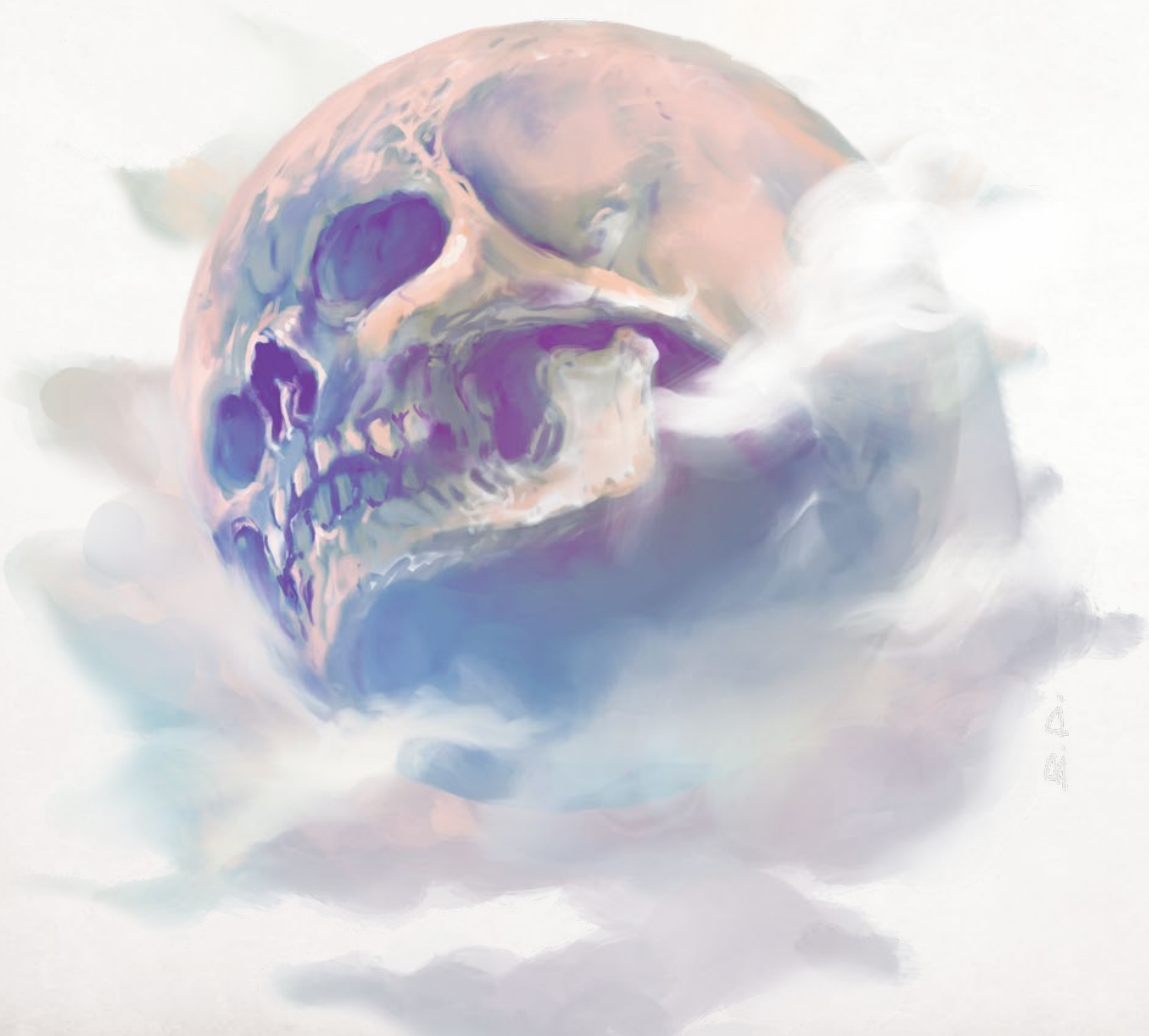
Treat necrovores (and any undead) as one level higher when the Tomb Moon is in the sky.

Worse than an ill omen, the Tomb Moon's appearance triggers a rash of necrovore activity, drawing unquiet spirits screaming back into undead animation in The Ghost Range and other territories, even as it lends them an unnatural resilience.

The surface of the Tomb Moon is airless and dead, dark as the grave, effectively one vast mausoleum composed of fused, charred souls. Traveling to it would require elaborate safeguards, including bringing one's own insulation against the necrotic polarity that slowly drains life away into a vast nothingness at the Tomb Moon's heart.

Chapter 17: When the Tomb Moon Is Full, page 206

But folks keep trying to go there, some because they want to learn how to strike the Tomb Moon from the sky permanently, others so they can learn all the bleak secrets that undeath can offer a sociopath. And at least one who sees it as the key to ending the World, or at least the world containing The Ghost Range—see the adventure "When the Tomb Moon Is Full."



PART 4

ADVENTURES IN THE WEIRD WEST

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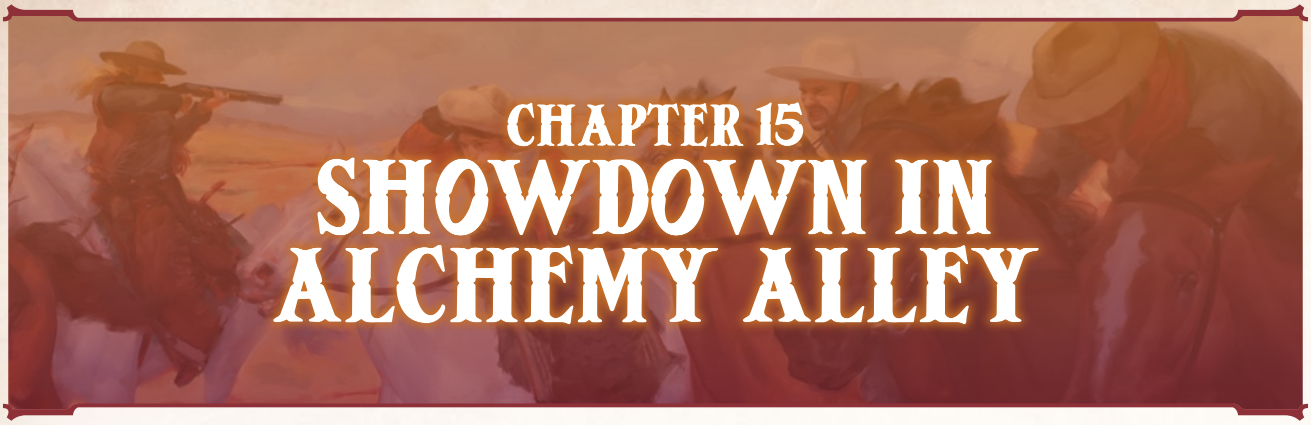


CHAPTER 15

SHOWDOWN IN ALCHEMY ALLEY

Outlaws stage an attack on an alchemist in the city of Midnight and the PCs are caught in the middle. If the characters want to end a festering cycle of violence, they must find the gang's hideout in the badlands and deal with them one way or another.

"Showdown in Alchemy Alley" is an adventure suitable for four to six tier 1 PCs. It can be played as a one-shot or incorporated into a larger campaign set in The Ghost Range or another weird west setting.

SYNOPSIS

The adventure contains the following elements.

Important NPCs: Your introduction to some folks the PCs have dealings with as the adventure unfolds.

Alley Shootout: The adventure begins with a rain of gunfire between outlaws and the PCs, who've formed a posse to deal with them. Alternate routes for the PCs to become involved are also presented.

Bad Blood: The characters learn of a feud simmering between a local rancher and the city alchemist. Investigation of the alchemist's shop reveals either that she's fine, or that she's been missing for weeks and something else has taken her place. Either way, the attack on the shop indicates that outlaws outside of town have grown far too bold and need to be dealt with, for everyone's sake.

Into the Badlands: It turns out the outlaws are hiding out somewhere in the badlands on a ranch. The badlands are a dangerous place, and the PCs' ride through is likely marked by a few challenges.

Outlaw Hideout: Outlaw hideouts are usually not happy places, but this one is especially dire and foreboding. Investigating PCs may discover it's because the outlaw leader is demon-possessed. The demon promises to release the alchemist if the PCs agree to complete a "simple task" for him.

Concluding the Adventure: The adventure ends if the PCs resolve things, either completing Boone's task, rescuing the alchemist, and/or exorcising or destroying the demon Boone.

Chapter 11: The Ghost Range, page 144

IMPORTANT NPCs

NPCs the characters are likely to encounter at least a few times during the adventure include:

BILLY WINTHROP, SHERIFF

Sheriff Winthrop: *level 4, initiative as level 6; two long-range pistol attacks deal 4 damage each round; carries a couple of sobering rounds*

Sobering round, page 134

For more details about Billy Winthrop, see Chapter 12: Midnight

Sheriff Winthrop's sheriff's badge is prominently displayed on his blue vest worn over a black shirt and trousers. Around twenty-five years old, he puts on a stern face, but he still comes off as a bit nervous to those skilled at reading other people. Only his friends call him Billy—as well as troublemakers trying to rile him up.

Motive: Keep law and order in Midnight and prove that he's more competent than his years suggest.

GHOST RANGE
MARSHAL

INEZ CABELLO

Inez Cabello's skin is sun-kissed and wrinkled with experience. Her black and silver hair is worn in braids under a black wide-brimmed hat. Twin six-shooters hug her hips. She projects the attitude of a hard bitten, no-nonsense cowpoke.

Inez was a revolutionary in a nearby territory who moved to The Ghost Range to start a longhorn ranch. When her cattle died mysteriously a few months ago, she fell in with Boone, who threw her a lifeline in return for allowing him and "some folks in tough shape" to hide out on her ranch.

When Inez recently began to suspect something was not quite right about Boone, he deflected by laying the blame for her herd's sudden destruction at the feet of an alchemist in the city of Midnight. Angered beyond reason, Inez and a handful of other outlaws headed into Midnight to "deal" with the alchemist by the name of Ainsley Yang. (When the adventure begins, Inez doesn't know Boone is demon-possessed.)

Motive: Righteous fury and the need for revenge against Ainsley Yang, unless she learns the truth. See Calmed-Down Inez for more details.

Inez Cabello: *level 4; health 18; long-range pistol attack deals 5 damage*

Calmed-Down Inez, page 183

AINSLEY YANG (FAKE)

The most famous alchemist in Midnight is Ainsley Yang. Her bead-braided hair, reflective goggles, vial-pocketed gloves, and purple and white striped cloak make her hard to miss. She wears a red scar down her right cheek like a badge of honor.

Not What She Seems: The real Ainsley Yang was taken captive by Boone about a month ago—he sent the fake Ainsley into Midnight to retrieve something valuable from her shop.

The fake Ainsley is only middlin' at alchemy—and at pretending to be Yang. She's the one in the alchemy shop (11) Elixir Emporium when Inez and her men storm it and take over. (The fake Ainsley is a variety of "strange folk" known as a lycoyotl. When the jig is finally up, she resumes her regular form as a big coyote and departs for good. She doesn't owe Boone anything—she just loves a good prank.)

Motive: Enjoy the lark of pretending to be Ainsley Yang until it's no longer fun, then run off. See Will the Real Alchemist Please Stand Up? for additional details.

For more details about the real Ainsley Yang, see Chapter 12: Midnight.

Ainsley Yang, fake: *level 3; tricks, stealth, and illusory magic as level 6; health 15; can effectively teleport to safety as her action when she decides to move on*

(11) Elixir Emporium, page 162

Will the Real Alchemist Please Stand Up?, page 184

Ainsley Yang, page 157

BOONE

Boone leads a group of outlaws that's operated out of Inez Cabello's longhorn ranch since the ranch fell on hard times a couple of months back. (Hard times for which he's responsible, but Inez doesn't know that.)

Tall and lean, Boone's stare almost seems to burn beneath the shadow of his wide-brimmed hat. His scruffy beard frames a face scarred to the point of disfigurement. The shiny black steel of his spurs and six-shooter stand in stark contrast to his ragged denim and leather attire.

Boone's Secrets: Neither Inez Cabello nor most of the outlaws that follow him know that Boone is a demon in stolen flesh. In addition to raids and other outlaw activities that bring Boone more joy than most, he's pursuing the secret location of the Hand of the Eclipse, a sorcerous artifact. Boone believes the artifact will give him power to call the Tomb Moon into the sky, and moreover, he thinks the alchemist Ainsley Yang knows where to find it. Which is why he kidnapped her, hoping to force the information out of her. However, Ainsley put herself into a protective alchemical "sleep" that has so far prevented him from learning her secrets.

Motive: Everything else is secondary to getting the Hand of the Eclipse for Boone. Which means that even though he's a demon, he might be willing to negotiate on any other detail. See Boone's Deal for more details.

Boone: *level 5; health 25; attacks twice with three long-range cursed pistol shots that ignore Armor; demon abilities; if killed and body not salted and burned, reanimates a few days later*

Demon, page 322

Demon, Cypher System Bestiary, page 54

Stolen Flesh: Long-Term Demonic Possession, page 173

Boone's Deal, page 190

ALLEY SHOOTOUT

Start the adventure *in medias res*: The PCs make up a posse put together by Sheriff Billy Winthrop because of gunfire in Alchemy Alley. One of the PCs is a deputy in Midnight, working for Sheriff Winthrop, either as part of their backstory, or as a newly deputized lawman.

Reports are that a group of outlaws rode in bold as you please, took over the Elixir Emporium (an alchemist's shop), and now are squatting there like ticks in a hound's ear.

(11) Elixir Emporium, page 162

Cover, page 220

Introductions: Ask the players to describe and introduce their characters. Encourage them to explain their characters' connections to each other, if those have been generated.

In addition, pick one character to act as Sheriff Winthrop's deputy. The deputy and posse has the authority to deal with whatever's going on with the outlaws in Midnight.

Lightning elemental: *level 4; Armor 1; lightning claws deal damage and stun target who fails Might defense roll; lightning blast damages all creatures in a long-range line for 8 damage on a failed Speed defense roll or 2 points if successful (once per minute)*

Outlaw: *level 3, initiative and gambling as level 4; long-range gun attack deals 4 damage*

(4) Midnight Grand Hotel, page 159

Situation in the Alley and Shop: As PCs ride up, they observe the following.

- The normally bustling alley and nearby Saloon Row is empty of traffic—most Midnight townsfolk have hunkered down in nearby buildings. But many still remain visible, peering through nearby windows or peeking around nearby carts and walls.
- Two outlaws perch on the Elixir Emporium's roof, spread-eagle, granting them cover from anyone returning fire from ground level. The outlaws take occasional pot shots at townsfolk who grow too bold, and there is evidence of several casualties—bleeding people in the street, crawling away. (The outlaws don't seem interested in murder for its own sake, but instead ensuring that everyone keeps their distance.)
- PCs who think to look and who succeed on a difficulty 5 perception task see two more outlaws hiding on the roof of the Midnight Grand Hotel across the street, watching Alchemy Alley. If PCs don't spy these two ahead of any gunfight in the alley, these two gain assets to their initial attacks and deal 2 additional points of damage with those attacks.
- The occasional sounds of gunfire and breaking glassware emerge from the busted windows of the Elixir Emporium. By the look of it, several more outlaws are inside tossing the place, though two of them are visible in windows, keeping an eye on the street. If PCs have a moment to take in the scene, they hear a woman's voice yelling variations of "Where are you, alchemist? You killed my cattle, and now I'm here to kill *you!*"

Gunfight: Initially, the PCs must deal with six outlaws—two on the shop roof, two through the shop windows, and two hidden on the hotel roof. All have cover from attacks made from the ground and outside the shop. PCs start the encounter a long distance down Alchemy Alley from the shop.

If PCs approach openly, presumably as part of a posse led by a PC deputy, roll initiative, because regardless of what PCs yell out (maybe something like "Lay down your guns. You're under arrest!"), the outlaws are determined to keep everyone away.

A couple of rounds into the gunfight, a lightning elemental streaks from a broken shop window, becoming a standing bolt of twisting lightning with a vaguely humanoid semblance. It stalks from point to point like individual lightning strikes, and immediately attacks a PC—treat as a GM intrusion. (Inez found a one-off cypher in the shop and threw it out to deal with the posse.)

Other GM intrusion possibilities during the gunfight include:

- PC's bullet ricochets and hits an ally or a bystander.
- A nearby horse breaks from its reins and knocks over the character or otherwise disrupts the gunfight.
- One of the outlaws produces a long iron pipe, aims it at the characters, and lights off an alchemical rocket that deals 5 points of damage in an immediate area on a failed difficulty 5 Speed defense roll, or 2 points even with a successful roll.
- All the outlaws get an extra attack, even if they've already gone this round, against a PC breaking cover to brave a hail of bullets in an attempt to dive into a broken shop window, break through the barred door, or otherwise enter the shop in full view of the defending outlaws.

Standoff Concluded: If the PCs defeat four or more of the outlaws and the lightning elemental, someone waves a white flag from inside the shop and a woman's voice—Inez's—yells, "Hold your horses! Let's talk! I ain't got no quarrel with you. It's a damned cattle-killing alchemist I'm after!" (She says something similar if one or more PCs sneak or break into the alchemy shop so they can directly confront her.)

If PCs hold their fire, so do any remaining outlaws, and Inez negotiates as described under Bad Blood. Otherwise, the remaining outlaws—Inez, the last couple of outlaws in the shop with her, and any still outside—defend themselves to the bitter end. See Alternate Ways Forward.

ALTERNATE STARTS

Instead of acting as the sheriff's posse, the characters could become involved when they run into the sheriff in Alchemy Alley and stop for a chat. The encounter begins pleasantly, but a rain of gunfire interrupts them. Outlaws have snuck into town and are in the process of looting the Elixir Emporium.

Alternatively, the PCs could be heading to Ainsley Yang's shop as a deputized posse to investigate several accusations of the alchemist selling fake elixirs over the last few weeks, as well as other strange behaviors, including standing on the roof of her shop and howling. On their way, the shootout begins.

Or maybe they're friends of Ainsley, and when an outlaw-interrupted visit reveals she's actually missing, the PCs decide they need to go looking for her.

BAD BLOOD

Inez Cabello is inside the alchemist's shop, tossing the place and shooting it up, looking for Ainsley Yang. (Fake Ainsley Yang is also inside, using her magic to hide. She might emerge, as described later, or be discovered sooner if a PC wants to look around and succeeds on a difficulty 6 perception task.)

PCs who negotiate or otherwise question Inez can learn the following, though Inez's white-hot fury makes her initial reaction difficult to parse. If the characters succeed on a difficulty 4 interaction task to calm her down, they learn much more. (PCs can retry calming her on a failure; as usual for retrying a task, they must apply at least one level of Effort for each retry.)

Furious Inez: "Where is she? She's a low-down, no-good, yellow-bellied snake, hiding from me—from justice! She poisoned my herd and I aim to have my revenge! I'm gonna make her regret the day her mamma spat her out! I'm gonna string her up and let the buzzards pick her bones! I'm gonna—"

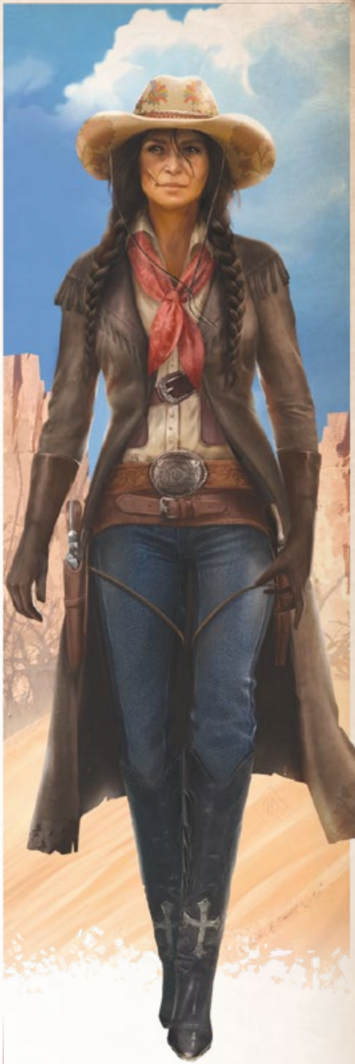
Calmed-Down Inez: Inez confirms that Ainsley Yang, the alchemist, killed her herd. How does she know? Well . . . she suddenly looks embarrassed and clams up.

PCs must make one more successful level 4 interaction roll to learn more.

Inez's answer in a nutshell: Outlaws are hiding out on her defunct ranch. Their leader, Boone, told Inez that Ainsley Yang, an alchemist in Midnight, was responsible for killing her longhorn herd two months ago. She's here for revenge!

The full story, which PCs may gain over the course of traveling with her, goes as follows:

- Inez had a longhorn ranch, way out in the badlands where no one could bother her.
- Things were hard, but manageable, until her herd all died from poison, two months ago.
- Her hired cowpokes gradually fled, but she stayed on, grieving. She stayed *too* long.
- Just as it seemed like she'd made her last mistake, a fella named Boone appeared.
- Boone and his men nursed her back to health. He asked if they could stay at her ranch.



Inez Cabello, page 181

Ainsley Yang (fake), page 181

- He offered to pay rent—enough that, over time, she could buy a new herd of longhorns.
- It was only recently that she realized Boone and his men were almost certainly outlaws. She knew that Boone had sorcerous ways about him. For instance, he encircled her ranch in something he called an "avaunt enchantment," making it difficult for anyone to find the place.
- When she got up the courage to ask Boone to leave, he told her who was responsible for the death of her herd and loss of her livelihood: Ainsley Yang. Fury, the like of which she'd never felt before, overwhelmed her.
- With Boone's blessing, she gathered some of his men who'd taken a shine to her and rode into town. For the outlaws, having a price on their head wasn't enough to keep them from the promise of whiskey, cards, and the possibility of a payday. For Inez's part, she saw only red.

If PCs question any surviving outlaws about Boone, they shrug and admit that their leader has behaved far more savagely over the last half year. They'd just put it down to too much whiskey.

Embarrassed Inez: If the PCs ask why Inez took Boone at his word, her eyes widen. "I . . . I don't know."

If PCs use skill in magical lore or a magical ability to scan Inez, they detect a lingering, but fast-fading enchantment. But even if they merely think to suggest that perhaps Inez was being manipulated, Inez seizes on it as the answer.

"It ain't like me to fly off the handle. Boone pointed me at the alchemist like a runaway stampede. But why?" (Because he decided he wanted to get Inez out of the way; she was becoming more of a nuisance than an asset to his operation.)

> "I'm not a devious man by nature. But when you're unarmed, your tactics might gotta be downright Archimedean!"
>
> —Buster Scruggs, in *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs*

Will the Real Alchemist Please Stand Up? At some point, fake Ainsley Yang steps out of a concealed cupboard where she was hiding.

The fake may try to keep up the charade of being Ainsley for a bit, but changes tactics if Inez realizes Boone has influenced her, as follows.

- "I'm not Ainsley. Ain't that a knee-slapper?" Her form briefly flickers, becoming that of a red-eyed humanoid wearing leathers and shuffling a deck of cards, before resuming Ainsley's shape. Characters may know of "strange folk" and suspect she's a variety of trickster some call a lycoyotl.
- "The real alchemist was gone when I got here. No idea where she's at. Could be lying at the bottom of a well, for all I know. Wouldn't that be a hoot and a half?"
- "Boone's looking for something. Hand of the Eclipse, he called it. No idea what it is. He thinks Ainsley has it. Or knows where to look. He called in a favor he owed and sent me here to get it. I've been turning this place over for a couple of weeks. I ain't found no hand, no eclipse, no nothing but a bunch of alchemical horse shit."
- "To pass the time, I decided to be Ainsley Yang. She weren't here to say otherwise. Ain't that a rib-tickler?"
- PCs with knowledge of such things who succeed on a difficulty 5 alchemical or magical lore task may have heard of something called the "Hand of the Eclipse," which supposedly has the power to call the Tomb Moon into the sky, though that may be a tall tale.

Fake Ainsley refuses to reveal her real name: "Call me Ainsley—the real one ain't here to say boo." If PCs become violent with her, she uses her magical abilities to escape. Otherwise, she tags along with the characters, curious to see what they do, unless and until she is credibly threatened or hurt, at which point she "fades into the tall grass" and is gone.

NEXT STEPS

In the wake of the showdown and discussion with Inez, it's clear an outlaw problem is brewing somewhere too close to Midnight.

Shop in Disarray: Fake Ainsley Yang's presence, her search for the Hand of the Eclipse, and Inez Cabello's subsequent arrival and shooting up of the place have shattered most of the wares and reagents in the Elixir Emporium. However, PCs looking for an advantage—maybe something like the lightning elemental in a flask that Inez spied and threw out a window during the showdown—find seven cyphers and a weird painting after a dedicated search. (There's no cash; Fake Ainsley blew everything in the register the first night.)

Cyphers: A preliminary search of the shop turns up the following items of interest.

- Two of the cyphers are concealed in a small, locked lead case (level 5) that one of Inez's bullets revealed in a hollow in the floor. Two scraps of paper each bear arcane passages that, if studied for a round, transfer a power word subtle cypher into the reader's mind, in this case break and door.
- Four alchemical rounds can be found tucked into a buckler that's rolled behind a shattered counter: a banishing round, an entombing round, a glacier slug, and a hellfire slug.
- The last intact elixir—labeled essence of reanimation—is held by fake Ainsley herself. If she sees the PCs searching the shop, she'll volunteer it. She says an anonymous customer left it. (In fact, she found the tincture under the counter.) The elixir comes with a note: "Pour over my stone-bound skin to wake me from a dream of protective mineral chrysalis —A.Y." Fake Ainsley has no idea what it's for, but can smell dwimmercraft in it.

Weird Painting: Hanging askew on a wall in Ainsley's small bedroom is a painting featuring two lovers embracing. The couple is lit by light streaming through a portico, shining from a dark sun ringed with a shimmering, ghostly halo.

The painting has a residue of magic, and someone sensitive to such things who succeeds on a difficulty 5 magical lore or similar task understands that the painting only reveals its true function if viewed through special lenses. Lenses that aren't anywhere in the shop at present.

In fact, the lenses are Ainsley Yang's goggles, and Boone is keeping Ainsley (and her goggles) in the cellar of Inez Cabello's ranch house. See Concluding the Adventure if the PCs eventually bring the goggles and painting together.

Wanted Dead or Alive: Sheriff Winthrop offers to lead the PC posse out into the badlands to deal with the outlaws. A reward for Boone is posted: $3,000 (very expensive).

Guide to the Hideout: If she's able, Inez volunteers to help guide the PCs through the badlands. The anger Inez felt for Ainsley is now directed at Boone. She begins to suspect *he's* the one who poisoned her cattle. (And she's right.)

Inez says that her ranch is only about a day's ride through the badlands. Or it would be, if not for the sorcerous defenses.

Concluding the Adventure, page 191

Very expensive, page 202

Power Word Subtle Cyphers, page 123

Break, page 125

Door, page 125

Alchemical rounds, page 129

Banishing round, page 130

Entombing round, page 130

Glacier slug, page 132

Hellfire slug, page 133

Essence of reanimation, page 189

Avaunt enchantment, page 186

ALTERNATE WAYS FORWARD

If PCs aren't in a negotiating mood during the showdown in the alley, and/or assume Inez is a no-good bandit who can be taken in dead or alive, characters may not talk with her. That doesn't change what Sheriff Winthrop asks of PCs, but finding the ranch/outlaw hideout is more difficult without her guidance. Possibilities for locating the ranch include the following.

- Fake Ainsley Yang still reveals her role to the PCs, even if Inez is out of the picture. She can direct them generally, but is affected by the same avaunt enchantment that keeps others from finding the place. And if things ever seem too dangerous, she just leaves—treat as a GM intrusion if PCs are counting on her.
- PCs can just track Inez's outlaw trail even without knowing the deeper story.
- PC abilities can vary widely. Maybe one can talk to Inez's spirit—as could be the result of the initial gunfight—and learn something.

INTO THE BADLANDS

PCs might assume that with guidance from Inez or fake Ainsley, or even by dint of their own tracking expertise, they can reach the outlaw hideout/ranch in short order. They'd be right, and the trip would only take about a day, if it wasn't for a sorcerous defense protecting the place from outsiders wandering in uninvited.

AVAUNT ENCHANTMENT

Boone tied the sacrifice of all the longhorns he poisoned on Inez's ranch to a demonic ward that prevents those not led by him specifically from easily finding the ranch.

Mechanically, any ride to the ranch stretches to at least three days through the badlands instead of one.

Moreover, characters attempting to finally reach their destination after three days must succeed on a difficulty 6 navigation task (eased if led by Inez or fake Ainsley), or else wander off in the wrong direction for miles before they can try again a day later. This process continues until the characters find the ranch, give up, or die in the badlands.

BADLANDS DANGERS

Some book-learned varmint probably named the tortured land northwest of Midnight. Folks hereabout still just call them the badlands. Most know enough to stay away, because the badlands kill people who aren't prepared.

In addition to the regular badlands sights and hazards, PCs also face some of the following dangers (or perhaps dangers inspired by these options) on their three-plus day ride looking for the ranch—and being pushed away by the ranch's avaunt enchantment.

Use as many or as few of the following encounters as seems appropriate to your game.

Several of these encounters make for ideal GM intrusions.

Badlands, page 47

BADLANDS ENCOUNTERS

Hoodoo, page 47

Rock-mimicking spider: *level 6, Speed defense as level 3 due to size; health 25; Armor 1; bite deals damage and on failed Might defense roll, poison stuns target for one round*

Dire coyote, page 80

Rattlesnake: *level 2; venomous bite attack eased, deals 3 Speed damage (ignores armor) for three rounds*

Disease, page 219

Angalith, page 85

d10	Encounter
1	What initially appeared to be a hoodoo grows legs, steps down from its perch, and attacks a PC on a horse. This "rock-mimicking spider" is big and not especially fast—thus its ambush hunting tactic of pretending to be a hoodoo until large prey wanders near. If PCs give up one horse, the predator ends its attack to feed.
2	Two dire coyotes spy the group from afar and howl, signaling the commencement of their hunt. If fake Ainsley is with the PCs, the characters notice she looks especially scared but won't say why. If the dire coyotes end up attacking the PCs, she hides. If one still gets to her, she leaves the PCs for good.
3	A character finds a rattlesnake has taken residence in their boot overnight.
4	A stand of twisted, yellow, blighted cacti stretches across the PCs' path. They flower as PCs draw near, releasing strange odors that remind characters of bad dreams; treat as level 5 disease risk.
5	A strange triangular symbol, from which lines radiate asymmetrically, is etched into a nearby canyon wall. It's decades or even centuries old, but still contains a bit of magic. A PC who sees or studies it who fails a difficulty 5 Intellect defense roll begins experiencing general "awe" for everything around them, easing their positive interaction tasks but hindering every other task until the invasive spell is removed or another defense roll succeeds.
6	An abandoned, ruined chapel leans in the shadow of a canyon wall, a relic of a dead religious order. However, the stained glass windows still notice if anyone tries to loot the chapel's sacristy, becoming a wrathful and protective angalith. If PCs persevere, they do indeed find some valuables in the form of a few golden goblets (with a total value of $500—an expensive amount).
7	Vultures fly up from a corpse and roost on nearby cacti. The corpse—a gunslinger who died of thirst—is picked pretty clean, but a search of the body reveals the following items (treat as cyphers): • level 4 locket; whispers an answer to one question • level 5 snuffbox; a pinch returns 5 Pool points • level 7 joker card; if ripped in half, character is invisible for one hour or until they attack

8	A group of three prospectors is lost in the badlands; if the PCs don't help them, they'll almost certainly die. One of the prospectors, a fella by the name of Amos Trejo, says he's got a map to a claim crammed with riches, which he'll hand over on the spot for a full canteen of water. Amos does indeed have a map, though the only landmarks are those the prospectors have run across while they've been lost. If PCs manage to follow the map (a difficulty 7 navigation task), a journey of two additional days finally brings them to a cavemouth leading down to a proscribed zone.
9	A chupacabra begins following PCs from a distance. Is it looking for scraps, or is it just waiting to get the jump on the characters when they let their guard down? Impossible to say, but how PCs treat it probably determines the outcome.
10	"Drill ants" able to burrow through anything—even metal—have gotten into a couple of the PCs' canteens. The water has drained away, and in its place are a bunch of drill ant eggs. If the characters don't find more water, dehydration follows.

Prospector, page 77

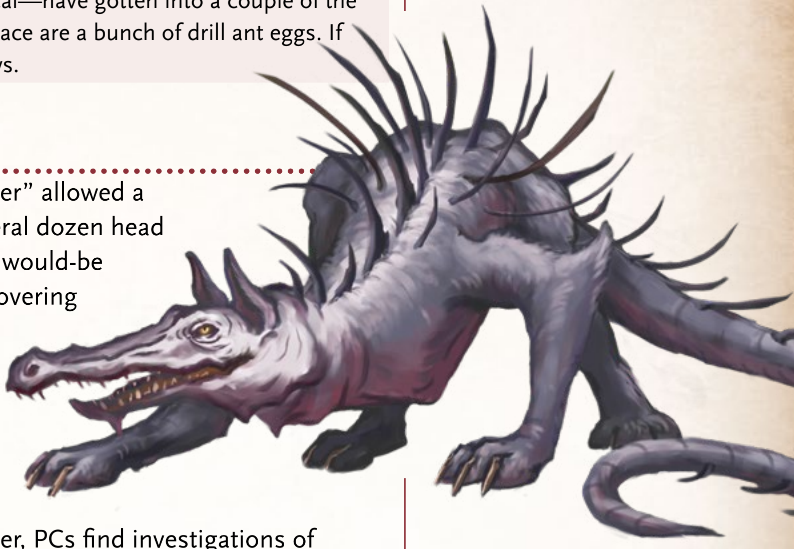
Proscribed Zones, page 150

Chupacabra, page 79

Dehydration, page 49

OUTLAW HIDEOUT

Smack dab in the middle of the badlands, "pocket weather" allowed a milder scrub grass region to form, ideal for running several dozen head of cattle. Since it was also beyond the wandering eyes of would-be cattle rustlers, Inez established her ranch here after discovering the place. It was hard work, but Inez enjoyed some success. Until all her longhorns turned up dead one terrible morning.



Ranch Layout: The ranch consists of the following obvious structures.

- Longhorn cairns—effigies made of dead longhorn cattle surround the ranch.
- The main house—two stories with a cellar.
- The bunkhouse—where Inez boarded hired cowpokes; moist-looking fungus grows on it.
- The barn—contains feed, hay, and some other larger pieces of secondhand equipment.
- Tool shed—stores shovels, nails, hammers, saws, pails, and other hand tools and equipment.
- Paddocks—variously sized fenced-in areas for feeding the cattle.
- Windmill—feeds a low-walled stone reservoir inside a paddock, creaking as it slowly spins.

The buildings all have a neglected, abandoned air about them. The windows in the main house look dark, the barn door hangs open, the shed looks half collapsed, there's weirdly moist-looking fungus growing across the bunkhouse, and no signs of life—neither people nor cattle—are visible.

Nothing of special interest is found in the barn, tool shed, paddocks, or near the windmill (unless you decide otherwise).

However, PCs find investigations of **longhorn cairns**, the **bunkhouse**, and especially the **main house** turn out to be more interesting and dangerous.

Inez's Intel and Sudden Realization: If Inez is with the PCs, she may have already given them the lowdown on the layout of her ranch, and where the characters can expect to find Boone and his outlaws, at least as of when she was last there: Boone was in the main house with her, and the outlaws were either out and about, or sleeping in her old bunkhouse.

Now, seeing her ranch again after several days free of Boone's influence, she realizes that she was probably under some sort of sorcerous effect from the time her cattle died to the moment PCs calmed her down in the alchemist's shop. Otherwise, she wonders, why would she have allowed a passel of sketchy strangers to stay with her on her ranch, no matter how much they promised to pay her in return?

She's surprised the place looks so dead. Maybe it's their lucky day and the outlaws are gone? (No.)

GM intrusion: *The character toppling a cattle cairn is subject to a concentrated blast of sorcery—their eyes haze over, they take 3 Intellect damage (ignores Armor), and they wander out into the badlands unless prevented. They return to normal once an ally interacts with them.*

GM intrusion: *A character entering the bunkhouse begins to grow patches of the same wet fungus across their skin, hindering positive interaction tasks.*

Perdition, page 172

Risen, page 92

Avaunt Enchantment, page 186

LONGHORN CAIRN CIRCLE

Grotesque sculptures formed of longhorn corpses—thirteen cairns in all—stand at regular intervals around the ranch's periphery, each topped by a horned longhorn skull staring outward. A bloody sigil is painted on the forehead of each skull.

Inez vaguely remembers Boone having his followers put them up, but she never previously thought to ask why they'd gathered cattle from her dead herd and staged them in such a hideous manner—yet more evidence of her being under some sort of mind-altering influence.

PCs who succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect task related to magical or demonic lore can recognize the sigils as letters of an infernal alphabet that demons out of Perdition sometimes use. Another successful roll allows PCs to guess that the cairns are physical components of the sorcery keeping the ranch from being easily found.

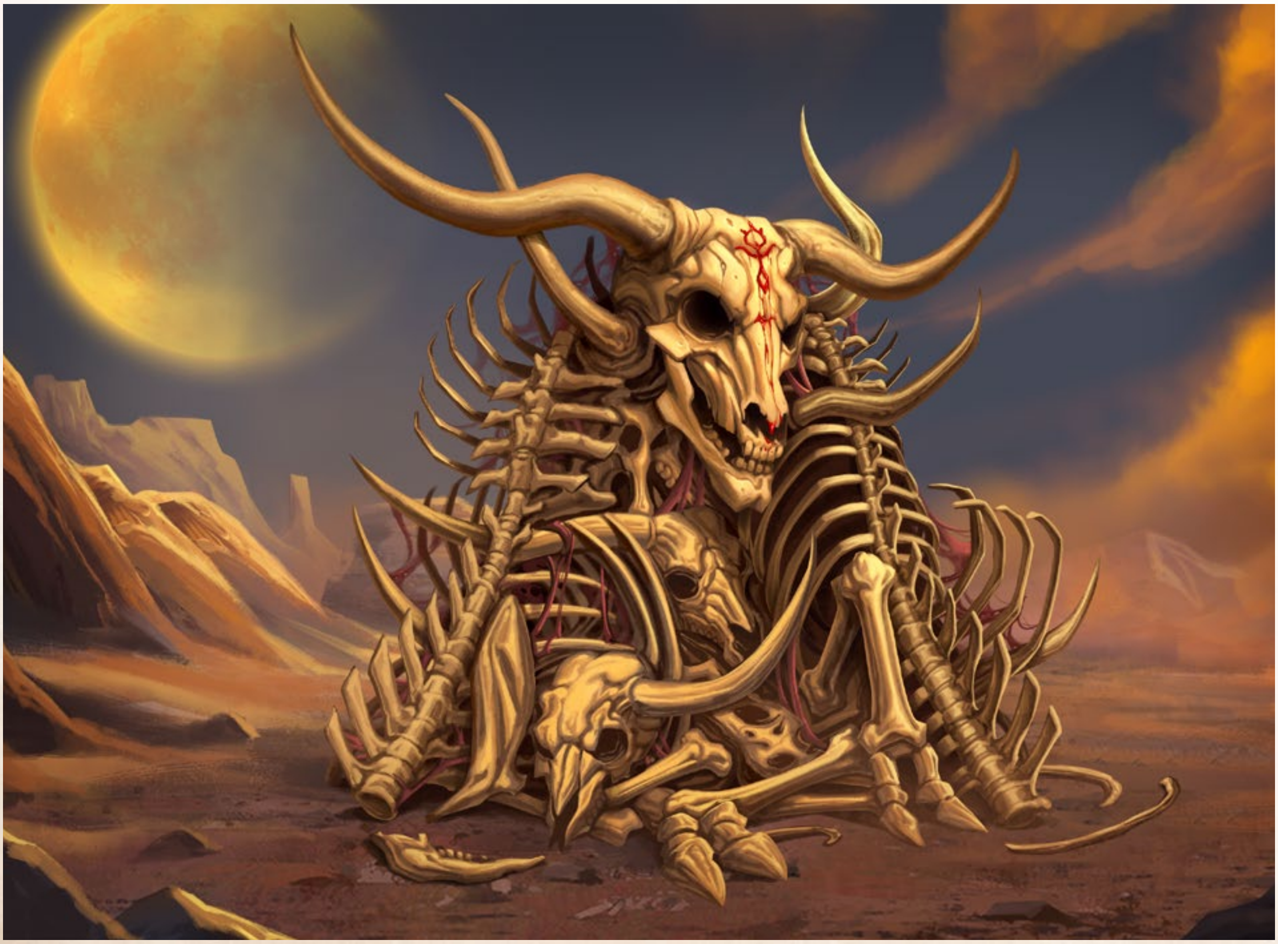
If at least three of the longhorn cairns are toppled (each a difficulty 4 Might task), the avaunt enchantment tatters and collapses.

BUNKHOUSE

Something horrible happened here. Most of the outlaws lie dead in their bunks, their hearts carved out. Disquieting (demonic) sigils are painted on the walls in the dead outlaws' blood—PCs with any sort of magical or alchemical lore knowledge who succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect task suspect the deaths provided energy for some sort of transformational effect.

What Boone Did: In fact, Boone sacrificed most of his outlaw followers in an attempt to break the enchantment currently protecting the *real* Ainsley Yang from his direct influence, despite that she's being held captive in the cellar below the main house. He wasn't completely successful, but made progress. And he revived four of the outlaws with the excess necromantic energy he'd produced, making them more capable as risen than they'd been when blood still pumped in their veins.

These risen are down in the cellar with Boone, usually.



Fungus: The fungus growth is an incidental side-effect—some combination of blood, magic, and evil was exactly what it needed to fruit and spread. And become dangerous. If a PC takes a scraping or tries to burn it away, a big section sloughs off the roof, combines, and forms a fungus crawler—a 6-foot (2 m) long "millipede" with thousands of tiny rhizome feet.

Fungus crawler: *level 4; Armor 1; burrowing rhizomes deal 5 damage*

MAIN HOUSE

Boone and his outlaw helpers are usually down in the cellar, under the house. But in the hours between midnight and dawn, Boone and his four risen lounge about the ground and second floor of the main house, eating, drinking, and snoozing.

Utter Disaster: Refuse—half-eaten stews and jerky, discarded whiskey bottles, broken jars with remnants of preserved foods, dirty plates, shredded fabric, human feces, bits of raw and rotting dead cattle, and so on—are scattered indiscriminately on the main house's ground and second floor.

If Inez is with the PCs, she's appalled. Her room was apparently taken over by Boone in her absence, because it's just as garbage-filled as the other rooms. Tasks related to finding anything useful—food, water, tools, other stuff one might expect in a house—amid the mess are hindered by two steps.

What's That Noise? If PCs spend a few minutes in or near the main house, they hear murmured chanting from the cellar during all daylight hours and several hours into the night. (But not from midnight to dawn, as previously noted.)

DOWN IN THE CELLAR

Inez found a natural cave when building the ranch house, and used it for her root cellar. Access to the cellar is through a narrow door in the back of the pantry in the kitchen.

Crude shelves along one wall are covered in preserved foods—canned meats and fruits, pickles and vegetables, dried fruits, jerky, and so on. About half the shelves are empty, and a quarter of what remains seems to have been infected with a weird fungus like what's growing on the bunkhouse.

But that's the least interesting thing going on in the cellar.

Demonic Ritual: Unless the PCs investigate the cellar in the hours between midnight and dawn, Boone and four outlaws—who've been killed and brought back as risen—concentrate on an occult ritual that uses human hearts (harvested from the dead outlaws) and human blood. Hellish sigils cover almost every single surface in the cellar, but most especially around a "statue" of someone manacled (level 6 lock) to the cellar's floor. Boone and the risen chant as they continue to extend their painted sigils.

Boone, page 181

Petrified Alchemist: The real Ainsley Yang is in a petrified state, a condition she inflicted on herself. She invoked the protective alchemy to keep herself and her secrets safe after her capture.

That protection is slowly breaking down in the face of continuous demonic sorcery. It's only a matter of a few more days before Boone finally breaks it and she returns to human form. If that happens, Boone can question her directly and without regard for her continued survival.

(If PCs searched Ainsley's shop, they may have an essence of reanimation that can immediately break the protective enchantment and return her to flesh.)

The essence of reanimation (a level 8 cypher) is small glass vial filled with cloudy fluid. A target in a transformed state, including a petrified target, is released if the contents are applied to them.

Extracted Belongings: In one corner of the cellar, a magic circle of ash surrounds items removed from Ainsley: a purple and white striped cloak, long gloves with dozens of empty pockets (that once held vials and tinctures), and reflective goggles. (The circle was meant as a protective measure by Boone, but any effect it had is now concluded.)

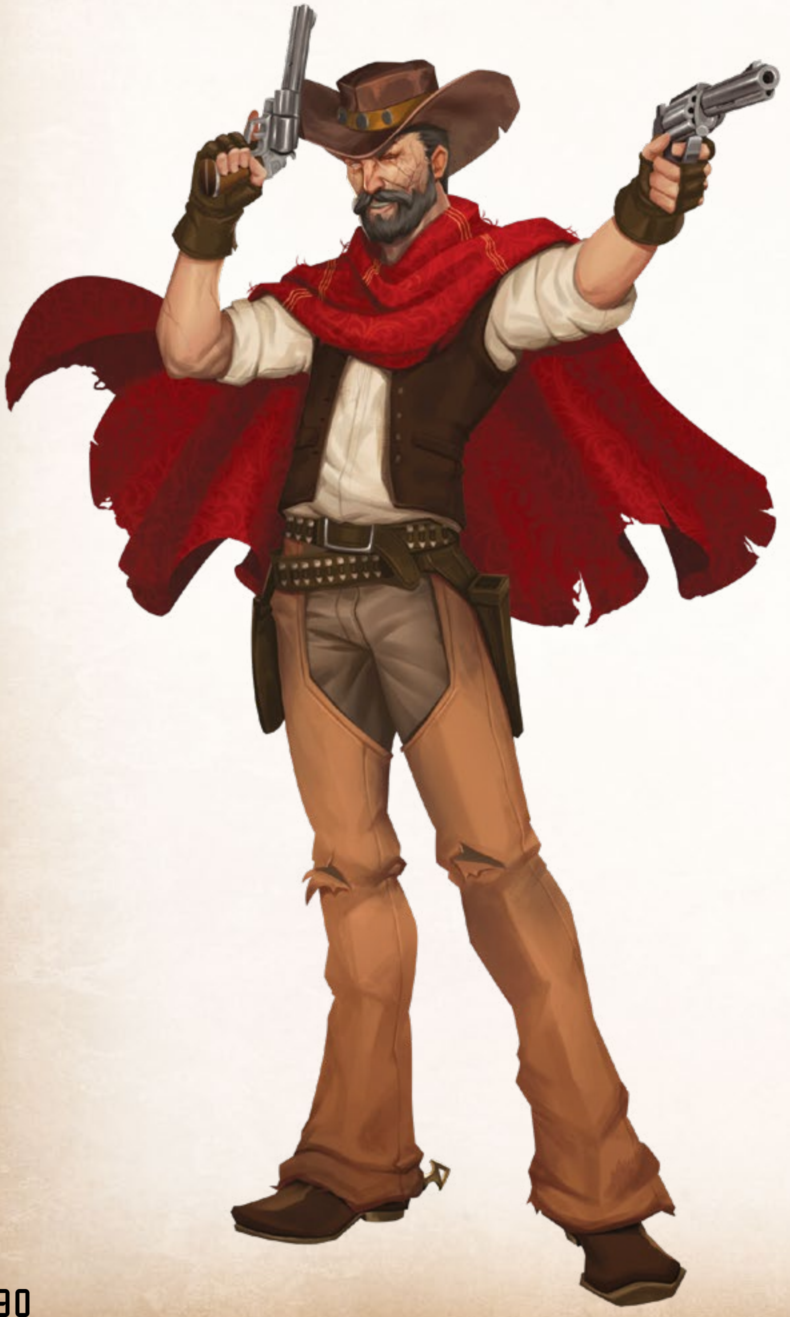
All these objects bear alchemy that burns demon and necrovore flesh (among other qualities). Boone separated them from the petrified alchemist as a precautionary measure. However, the objects are easily retrieved should the PCs or Ainsley herself want them. (The burn hinders demons and necrovores if they wear one of the objects, increasing by one step for each day the object is continually worn.)

Boone, page 181

Essence of reanimation, page 189

Boone's Deal: Boone prefers to deal with the PCs rather than fight them.

- Boone raises a rock hammer over the petrified person's head: "Hold! Or I kill the alchemist. Do as I ask, and she lives. Fight me, and she—and you—certainly die." (He can indeed kill her by bringing his hammer down, though it'll take a few whacks.)
- If PCs agree to hear Boone out, he explains the situation with the alchemist (i.e., she turned herself to stone to avoid him, and he's trying to turn her back to flesh so he can question her). In addition, he says, "Bring me the Hand of the Eclipse. She's hidden it somewhere in her shop. Do that, and I swear on Perdition itself, I'll let her go, unharmed." Boone doesn't know anything else about the location of the Hand of the Eclipse—that's what he was trying to extract from Ainsley when she turned herself to stone. But he does tell PCs what they should be looking for: a mummified child's forearm and hand sealed inside a glass jar.
- Boone reveals he's actually a demon in stolen flesh, if PCs wonder about him. However, he neither explains the Hand of the Eclipse's significance or abilities, nor why he wants it. He just grins with horrible, bloodstained, broken teeth.



Fighting Boone: If PCs don't like Boone's deal and try to steal Ainsley and/or attack him, the demon and his four risen fight to the death—he knows he can return in most cases, but doesn't advertise that fact to PCs. In addition to their regular abilities, Boone and his remaining outlaws call on the following additional attacks—treat as **GM intrusions**:

- Boone throws a tincture he stole from Ainsley that compels a character who fails an Intellect defense roll to randomly attack their allies for a minute or until they can throw off the effect with a successful defense roll.
- Boone unfolds a third demonic arm that's been growing in his stolen flesh, allowing him to make an extra attack each round.
- Boone taps a sigil as part of another action, reviving one of the fallen risen outlaws. (Alternatively, one of the risen revives Boone in the same way.)

Ainsley Yang Revived: If PCs have an essence of reanimation or Boone finishes his ritual with a couple of more days of chanting, Ainsley Yang becomes flesh again. Initially, she is groggy and out of it, capable of no actions other than speaking in short sentences (and crawling up to an immediate distance each round, if necessary) for at least a few hours. If interrogated by Boone during this time, none of her secrets are safe.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure ends a week or so after the initial showdown in Alchemy Alley, one way or another.

Boone Triumphant: If PCs fail to rescue the alchemist, Boone eventually breaks through her protection spell, tortures her, and learns where to find the Hand of the Eclipse. That might be the last PCs ever hear of him or the artifact, unless you later run "When the Tomb Moon Is Full" with the same players.

PCs Take Boone's Deal: If the PCs accept the demon's bargain, they'll have to acquire the Hand of the Eclipse and give it to him to ensure Ainsley's safe return. That requires the PCs somehow make the connection between Ainsley Yang's goggles and the weird painting in her shop. (If PCs revive and ask her, she may tell them, but urge them not to give the demon what he wants.)

If PCs do make the connection, someone wearing the goggles who looks at the painting (whether framed and hung in the shop, or cut out of the frame and transported elsewhere before being unrolled) sees that the dark sun at the center is a small cavity. In that cavity is a sealed glass jar, which someone with the goggles on can extract.

Inside the glass jar is a mummified child's forearm and hand holding a corroded silver coin—it is the Hand of the Eclipse.

PCs Physically Defeat Boone: Defeating Boone in combat also means a successful conclusion to the adventure. Without him to stop the characters and lead the outlaws, the PCs can quickly revive Ainsley, or her enchantment fades of its own accord. Either way, the Hand of the Eclipse remains safely out of demonic hands. For now.

XP for Concluding the Adventure: Award each PC 2 XP for rescuing Ainsley Yang, 1 XP for dismantling the avaunt enchantment, and 1 XP if Boone is destroyed or exorcised.

"When the Tomb Moon Is Full," page 206

Weird Painting, page 185

Hand of the Eclipse, page 138

CLIFF-HANGER FINALE?

A fun way to end the adventure is on a cliff-hanger. Here are a few options to surprise the PCs just when they think it's all over.

- If the PCs failed to salt and burn Boone's body, he's waiting for them back in Midnight.
- If characters keep the Hand of the Eclipse, it springs out of its jar and grabs a PC's face.
- PCs find Inez standing in a corner, laughing in a voice that sounds a lot like Boone's.

And That's Where We'll End: Immediately after PCs experience the surprise, end the game.

CHAPTER 16

FIVE CARD FIASCO

A once-in-a-decade poker tournament—the Hold 'Em Poker Open—draws players from all across the territories, because the stakes can be a bit out of the ordinary. For PC poker players, winning any given pot is sweet . . . but winning may prove just as dangerous as losing if their greed drives them to collect winnings in a proscribed zone.

"Five Card Fiasco" is an adventure suitable for four to six tier 1 or tier 2 PCs. It can be played as a one-shot or incorporated into a larger campaign set in The Ghost Range or another weird west setting.

Chapter 11: The Ghost Range, page 144

Alternatively, if you're just looking for a little poker flavor as a distraction from more serious adventures in your weird west game, sample one or two options from Other Poker Players, Playing the Tables, and maybe Between Games.

Playing the Tables, page 197

Between Games, page 199

SYNOPSIS

The adventure contains the following elements.

Other Poker Players: Your introduction to a handful of interesting poker players that'll join the PCs in their poker games during the tournament.

Playing the Tables: The adventure begins with the PCs sitting around a poker table, ready to play a game of poker in the Hold 'Em Poker Open. A few options for handling poker gameplay are provided, with a short discussion of how much or how little poker (or simulated poker) you want to include in the adventure.

Between Games and Tournament Results: A poker tournament also comes with other events and encounters, including conflict with those enraged by their losses and/or who've just had too much whiskey.

And after the games are all through, who'll be crowned the latest Hold 'Em Poker Open Champion?

Treasure Map: One outcome of a game the PCs play with Doc Catastrophe could lead the PCs to explore a location on a "treasure map," either because they're curious or because one or more of the PCs lost a hand and now owe Doc a favor. The favor Doc asks is that the PCs retrieve something called the Illuck Stone from the location detailed on the map.

If PCs end up following up on the treasure map, they find a host of dangers far worse than losing a game of poker.

Concluding the Adventure: The adventure might have finished when the tournament concluded—maybe one of the PCs wins it all?—and all repercussions of their wins and losses were explored or deferred.

However, if the PCs explore the location on the treasure map (which turns out to be a proscribed zone), the adventure concludes once they obtain (or fail to obtain) the Illuck Stone.

OTHER POKER PLAYERS

PCs probably don't know any of the following players, except maybe by reputation, as they've come to town specifically for the poker tournament. Most who enter the tournament aim to win, one way or another.

Each NPC description also includes their poker style—do they play it straight? Do they cheat? Are they any good?—and the unique or unusual "spec bet" they throw into the pot when their turn comes up to play against one or more PCs (as allowed by the tournament rules). The NPC description also notes whether that NPC is likely to seek revenge if they lose a hand.

LIST OF OTHER POKER PLAYERS

Player	Style*
Elias Pike	Maniac
Nora Bell	Cheat
Marshal Jack Custer	Reasonably Skilled
Jubilee Jones	Cheat
Edgard Longfellow	Reasonably Skilled
Evelyn Hellmuth	Ace
Doc Catastrophe	Novice

*See Simulating NPC Poker Players and NPC Cardplayer Categories

ALTERNATE START

If poker is not really your thing or you don't think the players will enjoy the unusual element of a game within a game, you could just start the adventure with the PCs getting hold of the treasure map. The most straightforward method for that is Doc Catastrophe hiring the characters to find the Cave of the Wild indicated on the map and retrieve the Illuck Stone on his behalf.

ELIAS PIKE

This painfully thin cowboy's perpetual grin is marred by a scar that runs down his scalp, half his face, and under the collar of the cotton shirt Elias Pike wears with sleeves rolled up. His jeans are supported by suspenders decorated with reflective snake scales. When he moves, the sound of something rattling is audible. Dice in a cup? A child's rattle?

Poker Style (Maniac): Elias always bets big, but rarely because he has a winning hand. He doesn't cheat, but he does get angry if he loses, cursing out other players as "low-down varmints."

Spec Bet: When one or more PCs play Elias, he tosses a live, trained rattlesnake into the pot. Elias claims the snake, named Marlo, makes the perfect pet.

Attitude: Elias gets angry if he loses the snake, but doesn't come after the PCs later. And if a PC wins the snake and treats it well, all is probably well. But Marlo doesn't suffer mistreatment.

Tournament Rules, page 198

Elias Pike: *level 3; short-range six-gun attack deals 4 damage*

GM intrusion: *Someone Elias has been feuding with appears and shoots him in the back.*

Simulating NPC Poker Players, page 54

NPC Cardplayer Categories, page 54

Rattlesnake (Marlo): *level 2; venomous bite attack eased, deals 3 Speed damage (ignores armor) for three rounds*

Treasure Map, page 201

Doc Catastrophe, page 196

Illuck Stone, page 138

> "We're in the West—the West is where you make your own luck."
>
> —Major Marquis Warren, *The Hateful Eight* (2015 film)

NORA BELL

Nora Bell: *level 6; climbing, stealth, and perception as level 8; Speed defense as level 7 due to quickness; health 24; moves a long distance each round; claws deal 7 damage; suggests actions for target in immediate range on a failed Intellect defense roll; only weapons effective against a vampire cause permanent harm*

Vampire, page 362

Vampire, Cypher System Bestiary, page 62

Ghost Accords, page 155

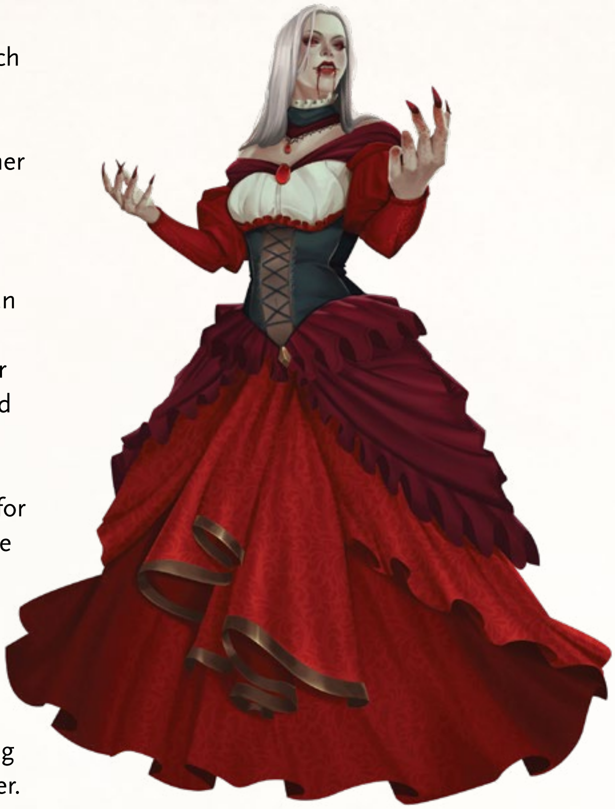
GM intrusion: *Nora loses control while feeding, and must be successfully coaxed away from her PC meal.*

Nora Bell wears an elegant red dress featuring a fitted bodice with black lace ribbons over a full skirt of layered petticoats. Her face is white as milk, her eyes seem to suck in light, and her voice is like velvet. Her movements are preternaturally graceful, sometimes languid, other times startlingly quick. Though she doesn't advertise it, and stares with surprised disgust at anyone with the poor taste to suggest it, Nora is indeed a vampire. Which means that if someone does try to make something of her presence, she falls back on the Ghost Accords as a guarantee for her safety and that of others.

Poker Style (Cheat): Nora's a great bluffer and can read other players' tells better than most. If she thinks she can get away with it, she'll also attempt to cheat by using her ability to mesmerize in order to win a hand against a superior player.

Spec Bet: Nora drops a promissory token for "eternal life" into the pot when playing one or more PCs. (Yes, if someone wins it and wants to redeem it, she'll make them a vampire—but they'll start out as a transitional vampire under her control.) However, she demands that at least one player bid with a personal I.O.U. promising to grant one "bloodmeal" to the pot winner.

Attitude: She doesn't seek revenge if she loses, but at some later point finds a PC from whom she won an I.O.U. for a bloodmeal. Assuming the PC allows it, Nora makes a quick snack of it, inflicting only 2 points of damage to the PC with her bite. (She forces the issue if the PC doesn't allow it.)



MARSHAL JACK CUSTER

Jack Custer: *level 5; Armor 1; fires long-range pistol twice per turn*

Salubrious snuffbox, page 140

GM intrusion: *The marshal realizes the character is wanted.*

Grizzly bull, page 79

Even when off duty, Marshal Jack Custer wears a dark blue frock coat with his badge prominently pinned to the chest. Under that is a crisp white shirt with a high collar and a dark bow tie. Black polished boots and a new-looking black wide-brimmed hat give the marshal what some might think of as an intimidating look, even before seeing his gun belt and holstered revolver. Attending armed is normally in violation of the Hold 'Em Poker Open tournament's rules, but Marshal Jack Custer is taking a stipend to provide security for the event, in addition to entering as a player.

Talk is that Marshal Jack Custer rides a grizzly bull instead of a horse. Now that might be true, but no mounts of any kind are usually allowed into the tournament.

Poker Style (Reasonably Skilled): Calculated and even-tempered, the marshal knows when to fold and when to go big. Maybe he's just lucky: he wins more than he loses and, as far as anyone can tell, it's not because he cheats.

Spec Bet: When one or more PCs play the marshal, he offers up a salubrious snuffbox as his bet.

Attitude: The marshal takes losing with seeming good grace. But he doesn't forget a face, especially those who beat him in poker. If a winner later does anything that has even the faintest whiff of illegality, Marshal Jack Custer shows up to deal justice. And maybe, though he wouldn't admit it, a bit of revenge.

JUBILEE JONES

Jubilee Jones wears a long, flowing skirt made from multicolored satin with a bustle in back. A fitted bodice with lace trimmings is pinned with elaborate jewelry. Her heeled boots add height and a touch of sass. Her elaborate hat is feathered by dint of being the nest of a watchful hawk named Wyatt who roosts on the brim, suspiciously eyeing Jubilee's competitors.

Rumor has it that Jubilee is the headliner in a saloon show from some distant town in the territory. If asked about it, she just laughs, which is the only answer she's willing to divulge at the poker table.

Poker Style (Cheat): Jubilee is a good player, but also has a couple of cards down her bodice that she'll totally cheat with if the pot is big enough to justify the risk of getting caught.

Spec Bet: When one or more PCs play Jubilee, her bet is a magic ring that she claims will keep you safe from Hell if you're wearing it when you die. Maybe that's true and maybe it ain't, but it's certain that other players seem especially interested in winning it.

Attitude: If she loses the ring and can't get it back later from another table, Jubilee shakes her head sadly but seems to accept the situation. Later, she tracks down whoever won the ring off her and either knifes them in a dark alley (or other out-of-the-way place) or hires some outlaws to rob them and return the ring to her.

Jubilee Jones: *level 4; Armor 2 from alchemically enchanted jewelry; sorcerous knife attack deals 10 damage if made with surprise*

Hawk (Wyatt): *level 2; flies a long distance each round*

GM intrusion: *A cheating character gains Wyatt's attention and a tournament-hired proctor comes over to see what the problem is.*

Proctor, page 198

EDGARD LONGFELLOW

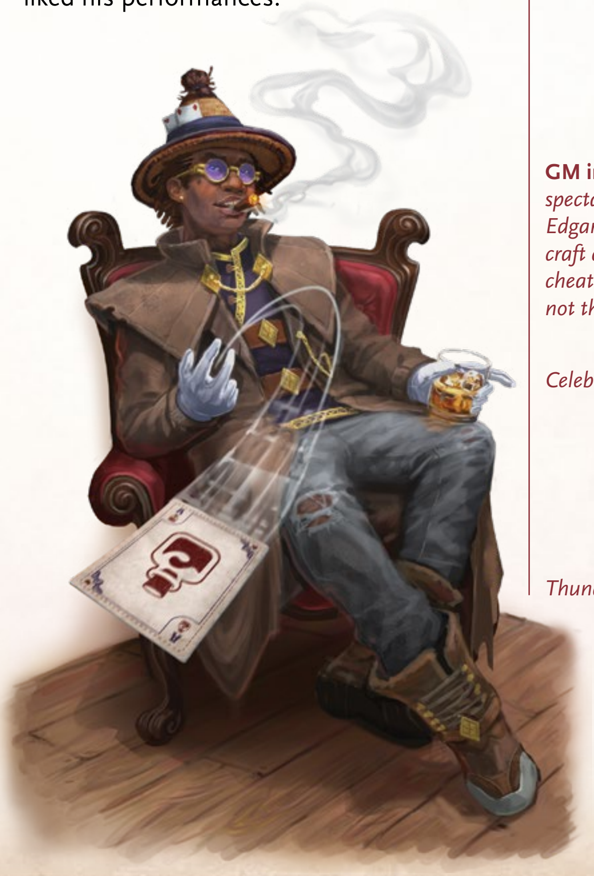
A patchwork of mismatched clothing tells a story of Edgard Longfellow's travels and apparent hard times. His faded denim pants pair poorly with his threadbare cotton shirt. A worn leather duster offers protection from the elements, if barely. A battered wide-brimmed hat is sometimes pushed back, but other times sits low on his brow, shading his face. Which is of course perfect for hiding tells.

Truth is that Edgard (whose real name is Calvin Lee) is an itinerant actor who plays his parts so well that they sometimes stick with him long after he's moved on. And right now, he's playing a down-on-his-luck gambler that is about to turn it all around by winning big at the Open.

Poker Style (Reasonably Skilled): Edgard is a serious player who takes the game seriously and doesn't cheat.

Spec Bet: When one or more PCs play Edgard Longfellow, he throws a bullet that rumbles faintly like distant thunder into the pot (a thunder slug). If he loses that, his next bet is a "golden ticket" that guarantees the holder admittance to a performance of any sort, at any venue in the territory that can hold three or more patrons.

Attitude: Edgard Longfellow is so confident of his eventual success that he is dumbfounded should he be forced to give up the slug and golden ticket, which he admits were gifts from a demon who really liked his performances.



Edgard Longfellow: *level 3, acting and performance as level 5; long-range pistol deals 5 damage*

GM intrusion: *A celebrity spectator who considers Edgard a master at his craft calls a PC out for cheating—whether or not the PC actually was.*

Celebrities, page 77

Thunder slug, page 135

EVELYN HELLMUTH

Evelyn Hellmuth: *level 5, initiative as level 8; health 27; Armor 4; long-range pistol attack deals 8 damage; once per day makes six pistol attacks as her action*

GM intrusion: *The character notices one of Evelyn's eyes fall out, which hinders the character's poker tasks this round. For Evelyn's part, she calmly pops it back in and continues playing.*

John Loomis the Watertown Warlock, page 208

Evelyn Hellmuth wears a three-piece pinstripe suit tailored for a perfect fit. A silk cravat the color of the sea adds a dash of color, and the polished watch fob dangling from her waistcoat screams money. But her eyes are mismatched, as are sections of the skin visible above the cravat and below her cuffs, as if she's been pieced together from lots of different people. Which is even more obvious when she smiles, because a second, smaller mouth nestles inside the first, and it's not always acting in concert with the outer one.

As PCs may suspect, Evelyn is a variety of forgeborn pieced together from people, not machinery. If PCs get her talking, she's happy to regale them with a tale of gaining freedom from the notorious alchemist known as John Loomis, the Watertown Warlock. As she tells it, he made her to be a killer, but after he taught her cards and other games, Loomis began inviting her to play in games of chance he hosted. One stormy evening, he bet Evelyn her freedom, and when she won, he just . . . let her go. In the years since, she's been making a living at the tables, but always wonders if Loomis will appear again to take back his reward.

Poker Style (Ace): Able to see the odds and the tells with just a glance, Evelyn quickly decides whether to bet or fold, or sometimes to bluff. In fact, her team (a group of players calling themselves Final Table) is favored to win the tournament overall, based largely on her standings.

Spec Bet: When one or more PCs plays Evelyn Hellmuth, her bet is that she'll personally substitute in for some other player in a future poker game (or even the current tournament). If PCs would prefer an ally for a different sort of thing—an outing or a gunfight—she'll consider it.

Attitude: Evelyn is a gracious winner and loser. Even if eliminated from the tournament, she smiles. At least with her first mouth; the inside one may be gnashing its teeth.

DOC CATASTROPHE

Doc Catastrophe: *level 4, tasks that can be improved by luck as level 7 (or 1, when his luck runs out); Armor 2; prosthetic punch attack deals 5 damage*

Treasure Map, page 201

Doc Catastrophe's engineer coat is mottled with acid and fire burns, stained with oil and at least one streak of something that glistens like a liquid rainbow. One lens of his goggles is starred with some past impact. His whirring, oversize metal left arm keeps dropping the cards when he tries to shuffle, sometimes so spectacularly that one could assume it's how he got the appellation "Catastrophe."

According to stories others tell and, indeed, his own claims, Doc Catastrophe has amazing runs of good luck that eventually come to an end in a spectacular manner. For instance, he's known for a mechanical invention that pulled water directly from the air, ideal for watering cattle on arid ranches across the territory. Doc was poised to make his fortune. But of course, a contaminant reacted to an integral machine component, sickening everything that drank from the liquid produced, cattle or human. Several died. (In fact, Doc Catastrophe's face may even be on a wanted poster or two the next territory over.)

And that's just one story, because Doc Catastrophe is dogged, despite his luck always going bad. His stubbornness is why he paid to get his way into the Hold 'Em Poker Open. He's not a great player, but he's got a plan—whether his luck holds or fails, he aims to find a solution to his curse.

Poker Style (Novice): Doc Catastrophe has only learned the rudiments of poker. When he wins a hand, it's pretty much down to luck. And it's only luck that keeps his poker tasks from being hindered by one or more steps. So when people watch him study his hand, they often see a confused or resigned expression on Doc's features.

Spec Bet: Doc drops a document case into the pot when playing one or more PCs. He says that inside is a treasure map leading to a secret burial ground for some long-extinct "strange folk" that were humanoids at least 10 feet (3 m) tall and covered with fur. This map reveals where all kinds of strange and interesting—and valuable!—relics can likely be found.

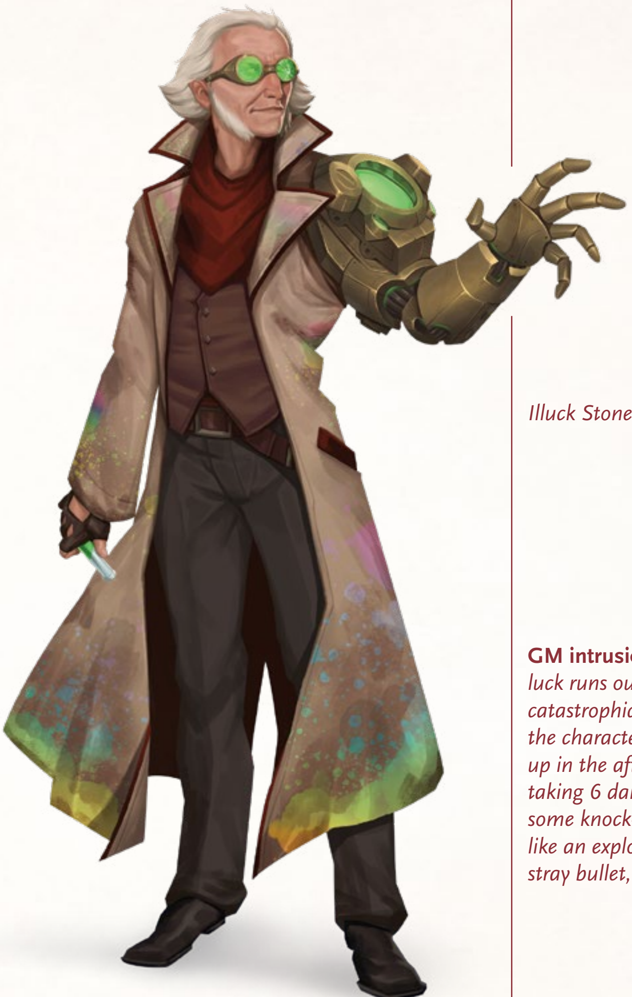
However, he only puts the document case into the pot if at least one PC bids a personal I.O.U. promising to grant one favor to the winner. (The favor can't be immediately ruinous to the person granting the favor nor violate their deepest-held convictions, but otherwise is wide open and may require a time commitment of up to one month, depending on what's asked.)

Attitude: Doc expects his current run of freakish luck to hold out long enough for him to win a hand containing one or more PC favors. If so, he calls those favors in, asking the characters to journey to a location noted on the treasure map as "Cave of the Wild," search it for valuables, and return to him with a "greenish, glowing oblong stone with red lines like veins visibly pulsing beneath its surface." Doc relates that some old seer down south called it the "Illuck Stone," and that it is one of the few things capable of canceling Doc's own curse of catastrophically variable luck.

If by some chance Doc loses the map as a spec bet, he offers to act as the winners' guide to the location shown on the treasure map, and help out with any dangers that arise. In return, he only wants one of the many valuable things that likely exist there—the aforementioned Illuck Stone.

If PCs win the map and don't want a guide, well, Doc takes that in stride, too—sometimes his luck plum peters out, and that's that. Which is why he built a subtle clockwork tracking device (level 7) into the map case. After he determines that someone with the map (presumably the PCs) has gone to and left the Cave of the Wild, he plans on tracking them down and making an offer for the object, which by that time may have made itself unwelcome enough that giving it away to Doc seems like a good idea.

For more details, refer to the Treasure Map section.



GM intrusion: *During a game of poker, Doc gets just the card he needs to make his hand a winning one.*

Illuck Stone, page 138

GM intrusion: *Doc's luck runs out so catastrophically that the character is caught up in the aftermath, taking 6 damage from some knock-on effect like an explosion, stray bullet, etc.*

PLAYING THE TABLES

If you're running this adventure, it's probably because you want to evoke the flavor of poker in a wild west setting. However, a little poker can go a long way in an RPG game. You don't have to structure an entire tournament filled out with dozens of NPC players just to eventually seat PCs with the different stand-out Other Poker Players described here.

In fact, you probably shouldn't, unless your players are *really* into poker.

Instead, you can move things along narratively, as follows.

Tournament Start: Begin by telling PCs interested in entering the Hold 'Em Poker Open that the tournament has begun, they managed to put together enough of a buy-in so that each had a starting chip stack equal to every other tournament player, and that they've enjoyed moderate success after the first few games.

Tournament Rules: Explain to the PCs that multiple tables of up to eight players start the tournament, but as players are eliminated (because they lose all their chips), new tables are constituted and new rounds of play begin. After a few days, it's all down to the final table of remaining players. In the end, the top three players will receive the largest portions of the prize pool. (The top scoring team also wins a prize!)

Spec bets are different than prop bets (short for "proposition bets"), which are bets made about things not directly affecting the game's final outcome.

However, the Hold 'Em Poker Open has an interesting twist: players can choose to substitute nonstandard bets—often called spec bets (short for "spectacle" bets)—instead of chips, up to twice per game. Unless a proctor decides otherwise, each such bet is considered equal to an expensive stack of chips (about $100), though their value away from the table could end up being considerably higher. This sort of betting allows for a lot more color than most tournaments normally allow.

Proctor: *level 3, detects cheating at cards as level 4*

Expensive item, page 202

Ask the PCs what sorts of spec bets each has to offer, if any. A proctor employed by the tournament approves spec bets, either ahead of time, or on the spot if someone finds themself in need of a little more betting power and they haven't already gone over the limit of two spec bets per game.

If a player wins a spec bet, they can choose to keep it, or use it as a spec bet of their own in a later game, as if it was an indivisible stack of poker chips worth $100 (an expensive amount).

Other Poker Players, page 193

Doc Catastrophe, page 196

Playing Poker, page 54

Team PC: Ask the PCs if they'd like to be on a team, which is a format that the tournament allows. In this format, players still compete individually, and a team's collective results are tallied to determine which team produced the best overall performance, which the tournament rewards with a prize. If PCs are interested, ask for their team's name.

Simulating NPC Poker Players, page 54

PC Skills and Real Poker, page 55

Let's Play: The time has come to sit down and play poker. This table includes one or more PCs participating in the tournament, and one or two of the Other Poker Players.

This is probably a mid-tournament game, meaning PCs have already played a few games to get to this table. The PCs each come to the game with seven expensive stacks of poker chips to bet with (worth $700), plus up to two spec bets (each of which is valued at about $200, or two expensive stacks).

This might end up being the only actual game, with the rest being decided narratively; one of just a few; or one of several, depending on how well actual (or simulated) poker goes for your PCs. If this is one of multiple games, intersperse a few of the encounters described under Between Games and Tournament Results.

If PCs seem to enjoy things, one or more of them may make the final table.

Evoking Poker With Dice, page 56

Even Quicker Poker Resolution With Dice, page 57

Final Table: The final table is a game for the last players standing. PCs may reach this game after a few earlier ones, or you can decide the first game the PCs actually play in-world is at the final table—in this case, narratively describe how the PCs have managed to make it so far in the tournament without losing their shirt. (If not all have been so skillful, give them GM intrusions to allay the sting of defeat—or being down to a single expensive stack of poker chips.)

Normally, PCs seated at the final table also have seven expensive stacks of poker chips to bet (worth $700), as well as up to two spec bets (worth $200, or two expensive stacks).

Make sure at least one of the Other Poker Players at the final table is Doc Catastrophe.

Then play some poker!

Real Poker: As a reminder, you can choose to actually play poker with the players holding real cards. If you do, refer to the playing poker optional rules for advice on how to simulate NPC poker players you'll be playing as the GM.

If the PCs are new to poker, or some are playing characters who are better at it than the player is in real life, check out the options provided under PC Skills and Real Poker.

Simulated Poker: Maybe you'd prefer to just use dice to simulate playing poker, because dice are quicker, you'd rather not mix real-world props into your game, or for some other reason. You can accomplish this with the Evoking Poker With Dice optional rule, or the Even Quicker Poker Resolution With Dice option.

BETWEEN GAMES AND TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Consider one or more of the following encounters for handling other parts of the poker tournament.

BETWEEN GAMES

Weave as many of the following incidents into the adventure as you like. Some occur between games, others during. A few are noted as GM intrusions, given how they complicate the situation. (Each of the Other Poker Players also has an associated GM intrusion to consider as well.)

No Take Backs: As sometimes happens, someone's spec bet is worth a lot more than $100—in this case, a drunk prospector by the name of Kyle "Shovel Mouth" Jenkins gambled his claim on a played-out gold mine that he bragged contains an untapped seam of sedimentary stardust. He lost the pot. When he sobers up, he starts trouble, and a PC gets caught up in the fracas (as a GM intrusion).

Jenkins is a big man wearing a dusty poncho and hood. He's affected by an alchemical alteration (or curse?) that gives him the ability to burrow using his mouth, but the same ability gives him a horrific ability to bite.

Shots on the House: Saloon staff walk around offering free shots of whiskey during the game. If a PC takes a waiter up on more than one free shot (or they've already enjoyed a beverage), they must succeed on a Might defense roll against a difficulty of 3 or descend one step on the intoxication track, which could affect their current or upcoming game.

Called Out: A sore loser from a previous game proceeds to drink too much whiskey, then calls out a PC to a showdown (as a GM intrusion). If you decide the sore loser is not one of the Other Poker Players, then it's Lydia Pritchett, dressed all in red leather and wielding a red pistol with red bullets.

What's He Doing? No one except the character notices some*thing* trying to rob the tournament's cash box (as a GM intrusion). The cash box is a big metal barrel welded into a frame at the center of the tournament floor. The thief is a tiny forgeborn no bigger than a small monkey, painted black as a shadow. It's fishing coins and paper money from the slot on top of the cash box with extendable wire fingers. When the PC notices the thief, they also see a gambler in a dress coat, tie, top hat, and fancy gloves standing nearby and apparently controlling the forgeborn with subtle nods and hand motions. This is Austin Wade, who's been banned from participating in the Hold 'Em Poker Open because of too many accusations of cheating a decade prior.

If the PC calls out the thief, Austin walks away, as if he had nothing to do with the forgeborn, which immediately tries to scamper away in a different direction.

Lydia Pritchett: *level 4, initiative as level 6; long-range pistol attack deals 5 damage*

Kyle Jenkins: *level 5; health 20; burrows an immediate distance each round; bite attack deals 7 damage*

Stardust, page 147

Forgeborn: *level 3, Speed defense and stealth tasks as level 5*

Intoxication track, page 66

TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Several sorts of awards are paid out at the Hold 'Em Poker Open, and the informal ones are already in hand. Any player that wins a spec bet during a hand of poker gets to keep it, assuming they didn't gamble it away in a later game.

Other Poker Players, page 193

What's He Doing?, page 199

Character Arcs, page 238

Who's Wanted?, page 34

Award Ceremony: After all the games are through, a ceremony is held on the main floor of the saloon hosting the event. While an announcer with a loud voice describes what's happening and musicians play in the background, the mistress of ceremonies opens the big metal barrel with a flashy silver key.

Assuming no one made off with the cash with no one the wiser (see What's He Doing?), the top player wins $1,000, the second-place player wins $250, and the third-place winner wins $100.

Team play is also rewarded, calculated according to cumulative results. The top team wins $1,000, which the team members can divvy up among themselves.

PC Winners?: If you're narratively running the poker tournament and don't actually play out (using cards or dice) what happens at the final table, then it's your call whether any PC is the tournament champion. Alternately, sidestep any possibility of losing players feeling slighted by indicating that no PC was a top three player, but their team won $100.

If you actually play out the final table (with cards or dice), play continues until only three players remain. Third place goes to whoever runs out of chips (and up to two spec bets) first. Second place goes to whoever runs out next. And first place goes to whoever wins the last pot.

After Party: After the award ceremony, a party ensues. A free dinner—but no more shots on the house—is offered to everyone who participated in the tournament.

Participating PCs have the opportunity to make the acquaintance of other players, including any Other Poker Players they didn't get a chance to directly meet during the games. If PCs have any arcs that could be followed up on with the help of one of those NPCs, this is an ideal time for characters to interact, since most of the NPCs are already inclined to talk with their fellow tournament players—initial PC interaction tasks are eased.

Such interactions could also lead to additional opportunities for adventure or at least interesting opportunities—beyond those noted under Treasure Map—as follows.

- **Elias Pike:** Hands out unsolicited tips on rattlesnake handling and, after more whiskey, directions to a den out in the badlands where one can find rattlesnake eggs he claims are as "large as houses."
- **Nora Bell:** Looking for a new tailor because the last one she employed mysteriously disappeared.
- **Marshal Jack Custer:** Putting together a posse in the morning to head out and find someone on the Who's Wanted? table.
- **Jubilee Jones:** Would be ever so grateful for someone to convince her secret admirer to stop sending flowers, cards, and other gifts. The behavior is moving into stalker territory. Step one is finding out who the secret admirer is.
- **Edgard Longfellow:** Looking for someone to help him run lines for an upcoming play.
- **Evelyn Hellmuth:** Thinks that one of the PCs is just so interesting and wants to hear more.
- **Doc Catastrophe:** Did I mention I've got a treasure map I need help with?

> "Well, right now I don't feel too agreeable."
>
> —*High Plains Drifter* (1973 film)

TREASURE MAP

PCs might end up with Doc Catastrophe's treasure map—called the Hellscramble Barrens Map—with Doc as a potential guide. Or they might owe Doc a favor on account of one of them losing a spec bet against him. The favor Doc asks is for the PCs to accompany him to the Cave of the Wild (using his map), explore it, and keep whatever they want—save for something called the Illuck Stone, which Doc reserves for himself.

Doc Catastrophe, page 196

Not Using the Treasure Map? In some sessions, the map won't become relevant, perhaps because PCs don't end up playing poker with Doc Catastrophe, the characters get the map but have other priorities, the PCs decide not to honor their favor to Doc, or for some other reason.

If so, you can reuse the rest of this adventure at another point in your campaign where PCs risk straying into a proscribed zone.

Otherwise, this same map is used in the next adventure "When the Tomb Moon Is Full," though the PCs will be looking to travel to Vanishing Hill.

Questions About the Map: If PCs have questions about the map, Doc Catastrophe knows or can dig up the following facts. Doc doesn't volunteer the information—he can be a close-mouthed son of a gun. PCs will have to pry it out of him.

- A prospector named Elijah Jenner made the map a few years back. Jenner dreamed of a ghost procession walking an invisible path through the badlands. The ghosts were not all human—some were "strange folk" of various kinds, including humanoids that towered above the others.
- Jenner lost the map in a showdown to an outlaw called Jane the Rifle. She either tried to make the Cave of the Wild her hideout, given as how it was so inaccessible, or just tried to loot what seemed like a burial ground for especially large strange folk. As the story goes, Jane was found some months later drinking herself to death on Saloon Row in Midnight city, raving about a strange crystal that ate luck, prophecy, and dreams—she called it the Illuck Stone.
- According to a seer Doc Catastrophe hired, the Illuck Stone is the only thing that can lift his own curse—one "gifted" to him (he thinks) by a primordial avatar, a mysterious mystic force behind the paranormal vices that some folks develop. His luck was dependable, once. Now it's dependably rotten, and he figures it's only a matter of time before he's dead. Unless he can get this relic of the strange folk.
- Doc tried to find out everything he could about the Cave of the Wild. According to local histories and the seer he hired, strange folk of a variety known as "wild ones" used the cave as a sacred burial place for their people, extending it further and further over generations of use. However, a few hundred years ago, the wild ones abandoned the cave. Why isn't known. But what Doc is certain about is that somewhere in that cave, the Illuck Stone waits for him to claim it as his own.

Paranormal Vices of the Weird West, page 65

Chapter 17: When the Tomb Moon Is Full, page 206

ON THE PATH

The Hellscramble Barrens are a section of the badlands that are known to be especially arid and dangerous. However, if PCs follow the ghost path shown on the map, they should be relatively safe.

Badlands, page 47

GM intrusion: *The character loses the path and must succeed on a difficulty 5 navigation task to avoid getting turned around and heading in exactly the wrong direction.*

Quetzalsaur, page 79

GM intrusion: *The character sees the Tomb Moon flicker into the sky for a few seconds. At the same time, all the provisions that character carries rot to inedibility.*

GM intrusion: *A rock dislodged (tossed?) from high on the butte strikes the character for 5 damage.*

GM intrusion: *The character steps into an area of permeable sand that sucks them down on a failed difficulty 4 Speed defense roll, where they eventually suffocate if not pulled up.*

Ghost Path: If the PCs started their adventure in the town of Midnight, they're probably following the path starting from the southeastern part of the map. Without the map, the ghost path is nearly impossible to find. Even with the map, staying on it is tricky. At times it seems like a path made by erosion and flash floods, other times a secret way worn down by animals hunting for prey or water; as such, it sometimes lapses for hundreds of yards at a time before picking up again.

Gehenna Drifts: The sand drifts here have an odd purplish cast to them, and sometimes shift or collapse unexpectedly. The ghost path leading through them is a sandy rut that sucks at each footstep.

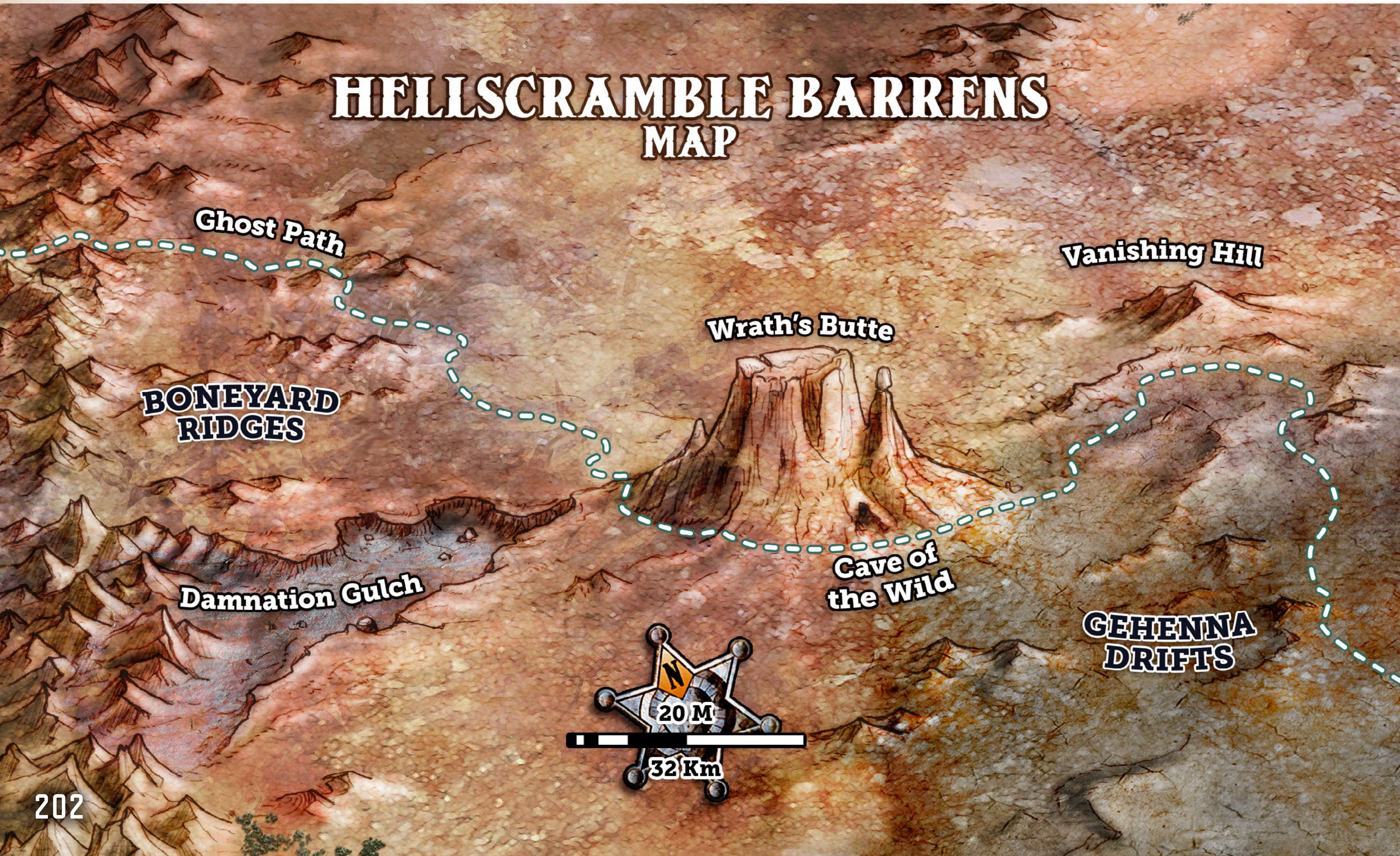
Vanishing Hill: When the PCs come to the location shown on the map—which they do if they're following the ghost path—there is no hill.

Boneyard Ridges: These high, weird peaks look a little bit like tumbled piles of human bones. Distant winged shapes are sometimes visible flying above them. Quetzalsaur, most likely.

Damnation Gulch: According to one tall tale, this deep, V-shaped valley was scratched into the earth by a god's finger. A faint mist fills the lowest parts of the valley, smelling strongly of sharp, unpleasant chemicals.

Wrath's Butte: This lone butte stands a few hundred feet high. Its sides are scalloped in sharply defined vertical striations, some say by monstrous beings that walked the land aeons ago.

Cave of the Wild: One of the grooves between the vertical striations cutting Wrath's Butte is so deep it looks like there might be a cave back there . . . and indeed there is.



CAVE OF THE WILD

Cave Overview: The Cave of the Wild extends under Wrath's Butte in a single relatively straight, unlighted tunnel shaft approximately a mile (1.6 km) long, descending at about a 20-degree angle. Alcoves dot the tunnel along its length, each a resting place for a naturally mummified giant-sized furred humanoid. The tunnel shaft terminates just past a deeper strata boundary layer, opening into a larger worked space that turns out to be a proscribed zone.

Cave Entrance: A faint, cool breeze stirs hair and garments of those standing at the threshold. The mouth is approximately 30 feet (9 m) in diameter. Small bones of recognizable desert animals are scattered near the cave mouth, but no obvious predator spoor can be found.

Burial Alcoves: Every dozen or so strides along either tunnel wall, a roughly hewn alcove contains a mummified wild one curled into a fetal position. Alive, most would've been 10 feet (3 m) tall or more. None of the remains retain grave goods, or at least, no goods that haven't long crumbled to dust. However, as explorers progress down through the tunnel, they may have one or more of the Cave of the Wild Tunnel Encounters.

Tunnel's End: Crude marks cover the floor, walls, and ceiling of the tunnel, creating a rough ring separating the tunnel's end from a larger area (the Proscribed Basin) beyond and slightly deeper.

The etchings contain both a message and magical defense. The message, scribed in the tongue of wild ones (which PCs are unlikely to know, but perhaps can decipher through alchemical or sorcerous means) reads, "Death and madness lie beyond this line. Turn back."

Those who make to step across the line trigger the magical defense. A light pulse illuminates the etchings, which release a heart-stopping roar. All creatures within short range that are up-tunnel from the etchings and fail a difficulty 5 Intellect defense roll spend the next minute running away, as far and fast as they can. Affected targets can make a new defense roll each round to throw off the effect early. Once triggered, the defense becomes quiescent for about ten hours.

CAVE OF THE WILD TUNNEL ENCOUNTERS

d6	Encounter
1	A couple of giant scorpions scuttle out of the shadows not far from the cave mouth, seeking to defend "their" lair.
2	The decaying corpse of a previous explorer is found with full prospector's gear (including a shovel and pick). There are no signs of violence—it looks like he just keeled over, though perhaps while running as fast as possible out of the cave. Among his possessions is a purse with $10 (a moderate sum), a much rougher map of the area than Doc Catastrophe's version, a small bag of stardust weighing no more than 2 ounces (57 g) worth about $20, and a pale crystal ring a little too large for the corpse's finger. The ring doesn't seem to do anything (it's a depleted alien artifact), though it activates if brought back down into the proscribed zone at the tunnel's end; it's a ring of seeping travel.
3	One of the wild one mummies is infested with a hibernating flesh roach swarm that wakes with tunnel activity and is drawn to the nearest character to feed.
4	The tunnel has collapsed here, blocking the way. Digging it out will take a while, though the work goes much quicker if a shovel and pick are handy.
5	One of the wild one mummies stirs in undead animation! No, it's actually the ground itself, shaking with a minor tremor, causing the mummy to sprawl out of its alcove and into the tunnel.
6	The wind changes direction—it was rushing in, but now it rushes out. It's colder, and is accompanied by an ominous rumble, almost too low to hear.

Giant scorpion: *level 3; poison stinger deals additional 3 Speed damage (ignores Armor) on failed Might defense roll*

Ring of seeping travel, page 140

Flesh roach swarm: *level 4, Speed defense as level 3; takes only 1 damage from successful attacks against the swarm that don't deal damage in an area; swarm's attack deals 4 ambient damage*

Proscribed Basin: The tunnel breaks into a far older circular space approximately 200 feet (60 m) in diameter, composed of whitish crystal veined with red filaments. The floor is similarly smooth, and the ceiling raises into a dome easily 70 feet (20 m) high at the center. The crystal glows faintly, dimly illuminating the entire space, which seems completely empty—except for the sound.

Hidden in a Dream: A pattering sound like falling rain is heard. Those attempting to understand the apparently sourceless sound's origins can attempt a difficulty 5 Intellect task (training in psychic lore, dream lore, or similar applies). On a success, a character gets the sense that the sound is an echo of the room's true contents, which are out of phase or perhaps exist as a standing dream.

Breaking Into a Nightmare: Getting into the right frame of mind to see what's going on requires a character to either succeed on another difficulty 5 Intellect task, or put on (or look through) the ring of seeping travel discovered on the prospector in the outer tunnel. PCs can retry the task, applying Effort each time, as normal.

Those who can't see can't interact with the basin's true contents, other than indirectly by what happens to their allies who can.

Illuck Stone, page 138

Swarm ring, page 141

Wheel of consumption, page 142

Ilu Idol, page 138

Lightning eye, page 139

True Basin: Those able to see the basin's true contents can't unsee it. Mucousy fluid that quivers and heaves as if alive fills the basin, forming a shin-height pool covering the entire floor. The fluid has the consistency of thickening porridge. Anyone who sees it can also touch it—and it can touch them. "Rain" falls upward from the floor, though the sound in the true basin is more like thousands of tiny, tormented screams.

When It Rains: The rain collects in the domed ceiling, creating another layer of the thick, mucousy fluid like the one the PCs are standing in. Except the one above seems a lot more active, extending pseudopods, forming blinking eyes, and opening mouths that mutter and gurgle. This abysmal thing is partially alive, and eventually notices PCs that can see it.

GM intrusion: *The abysmal thing reaches a long pseudopod after a character fleeing up the tunnel to make one last attack.*

Abysmal Thing: *level 6, Speed defense as level 3 due to size; health 25 (regains 3 health each round); attacks three targets at once with long-range pseudopods; expels a servitor zombie composed of sludge and mummified wild one parts as action*

Zombie, page 371

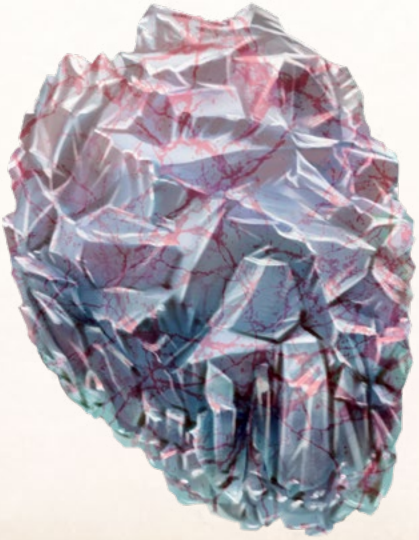
Zombie Cypher System Bestiary, page 170

Below the abysmal thing on the ceiling, a dais pokes up from the pool on the floor.

Dais: A circular crystal platform about 3 feet (1 m) tall rises out of the fluid at floor level. Under a thin, cracked layer of what seems like dried mud-like material, a pile of rubble litters the platform. The rubble is composed mostly of thicker chunks of dried mud-like material, but a concerted search through it paired with a successful difficulty 3 perception task uncovers the objects indicated.

- A head-sized lump of crystal with red filaments running through it—the Illuck Stone.
- A ring made of dark crystal with strange etchings—a swarm ring.
- A crystal hoop about 1 foot (30 cm) in diameter—a wheel of consumption.
- A 2-inch (5 cm) tall figurine of a humanoid sitting cross-legged densely etched with hieroglyphs—an Ilu idol.
- A glimmering pearl-sized crystal—a lightning eye.

Noticed by the Thing: The more time PCs spend in the area with the ability to see (and be seen by) the true contents, and especially each time an object is taken from the dais, there's a growing chance the abysmal thing on the ceiling takes note of the intruders and attacks (treat as a group GM intrusion if more than one PC can see it). If PCs flee the room, the abysmal thing doesn't follow. Mostly.



CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs explore the Cave of the Wild and survive their encounter with the abysmal thing in the proscribed zone, the adventure concludes after any repercussions of their visit are wrapped up.

No Luck for Doc: If Doc Catastrophe accompanied the PCs but the PCs fail to get the Illuck Stone, or don't let him have it, he becomes depressed or enraged, respectively.

In the former case, a few weeks later, PCs hear about (or witness) Doc dying in a freak accident, such as being struck by a falling meteorite made of compacted stardust.

In the latter case, Doc Catastrophe rounds up some allies a few days later and tries to steal the Illuck Stone from the PCs.

Doc Gets the Stone: If Doc Catastrophe is given the stone, he uses it to remove his curse.

If PCs are involved, Doc asks them to help him set up an experimental chamber in his barn-lab involving three metal plates connected by wires and alchemical jars. He stands on one metal plate, the Illuck Stone is placed on a second plate, and a dead goat is placed on the last plate. He asks one of the PCs to throw a switch, and a massive discharge runs between the stone, Doc, and the dead goat. When it's over, the Illuck Stone is depleted and Doc's curse is lifted. It's whiskey time!

XP for Concluding the Adventure: Award each PC 1 XP for entering the poker tournament, 1 XP if their team wins the tournament, 1 XP if they explore the Cave of the Wild, and 1 XP if they give the Illuck Stone to Doc Catastrophe and help him remove the curse.

CLIFF-HANGER FINALE?

Sometimes cliff-hangers make fun adventure finales. A few options to surprise the PCs just when they think it's all over include the following.

- If PCs had an especially unpleasant interaction with another poker player, that NPC waits for them somewhere they least expect, like showing up in the bath house, as their barber, etc.
- If the PCs escaped the abysmal thing, a few nights later, they begin hearing a pattering sound like falling rain, but no rain is visible.
- If the PCs help Doc remove his curse with the setup Doc created in his barn-lab, the goat corpse animates, growing and mutating into a towering, undead goat-monstrosity.

And That's Where We'll End: Immediately after PCs experience the surprise, end the game.

CHAPTER 17
WHEN THE TOMB MOON IS FULL

Folks know to stay inside when the Tomb Moon shines full. Zombies, frostwalkers, vampires, and worse necrovores cavort when its fell light stains the sky. But the PCs' job requires that they not only brave the moon's foul radiance, but actually travel to its airless, lifeless surface. If they don't, the notorious Watertown Warlock will exhume a frozen head interred there and use it to usher in the end of everything.

"When the Tomb Moon Is Full" is an adventure suitable for four to six tier 3 or higher PCs. It can be played as a one-shot or incorporated into a larger campaign set in The Ghost Range or another weird west setting.

Chapter 11: The Ghost Range, page 144

SYNOPSIS

The adventure contains the following elements.

Moon Watchers: Your introduction to important NPCs the characters will work with and/or against as the adventure unfolds.

Closing a Coffin Opens a Door: The adventure begins with the PCs finishing up a job clearing up another goddamned vamp nest. But in so doing, they find a pieced-together vampire more sympathetic than villainous. This "patchwork man" begs the PCs to stop John Loomis, the Watertown Warlock, whose unbalanced rage threatens everything.

Empty Estate: PCs who investigate John Loomis's spooky estate at the edge of town face a few dangers, but not Loomis—he's already on his way to the Tomb Moon. PCs can use what they find at the estate to develop strategies to follow, and to protect themselves from the Tomb Moon's influence.

Vanishing Hill: One way or another, PCs learn of a place in the badlands called Vanishing Hill. It's usually not there, but it's solid enough when the Tomb Moon is full. Predicting the moon's next full phase—or causing it—gives the PCs a direct route through the Moon Gate and onto the Tomb Moon.

Mare Mortis: The Tomb Moon is a spiritual lodestone for death. The "Sea of Death," where the Moon Gate delivers travelers, is a dark, basaltic plain littered with heaped and crumbling mausoleums and a massive cryo-crypt pulled from another reality. One of the frozen heads inside it is the key—Loomis hopes to wake it from its sustaining dream of The Ghost Range.

Concluding the Adventure: PCs can end the adventure by either eliminating John Loomis or, at the bare minimum, destroying the frozen head he seeks in a way that doesn't "wake" it. Alternately, characters might decide they'd like a new reality and allow the dream to end.

MOON WATCHERS

The PCs will get to know the Patchwork Man and John Loomis as this adventure proceeds.

THE PATCHWORK MAN

The Patchwork Man resembles a roughly sewn human-sized doll. His right arm is pale and slender, while his left is muscular and tattooed. One of his eyes is ice blue, the other ember red, and his scalp is half bald, half shaggy with blond curls. Irregular patches of his skin are made of denim, satin, lace, and other types of cloth. Iron cuffs encircle both his wrists, dangling shattered chains.

Patchwork Man: *level 4; climbing, stealth, and perception as level 6; health 18; moves a long distance each round; claws deal 5 damage; suggests actions for a target in immediate range on a failed Intellect defense roll; only weapons effective against a vampire cause permanent harm*

Vampire, page 362

Vampire, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 62*

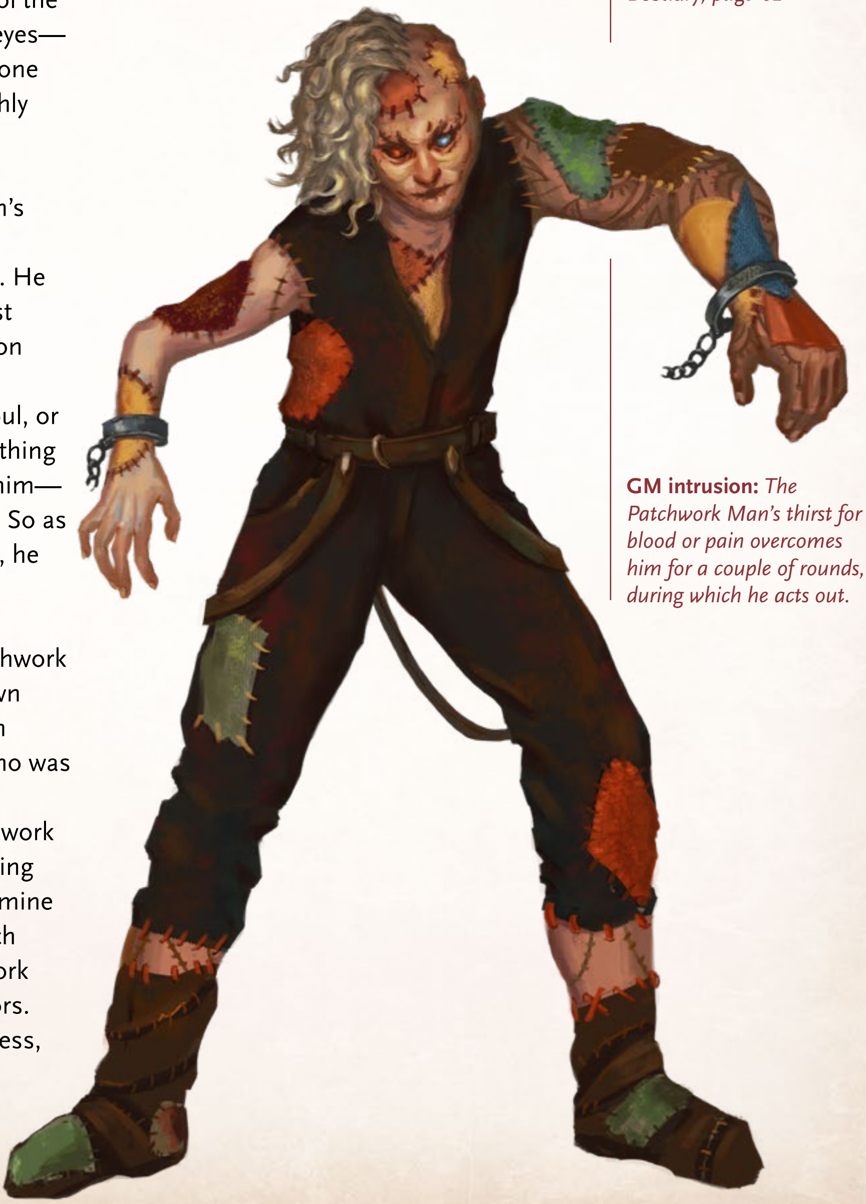
Origin: Both alive and dead, the Patchwork Man is cobbled together from the remnants of hundreds of dolls plus thirteen distinct vampires. He was assembled and reanimated by the alchemy of John Loomis. Like most forgeborn, the Patchwork Man is a unique creation, but he's special even among forgeborn. For one thing, he permanently broke his creator's control the moment he opened his mismatched eyes—he tried to drain his maker's blood in one long draught. He failed, and was harshly punished for his bid for freedom.

Moral Awakening: The Patchwork Man's constant shaking pain mirrors the conflicting desires warring within him. He is driven to find blood, but unlike most vampires, some accident of his creation imbued him with something akin to compassion. Call it a conscience, a soul, or even just a burning desire to be something different than what his creator made him—the Patchwork Man wants to be good. So as he learned what Loomis wanted to do, he realized his destiny was to stop it.

Trapped by His Kin: Recently, the Patchwork Man managed to escape the Watertown Warlock. Jubilant, he sought help from others in his quest to stop Loomis, who was finally acting on his long-laid plans.

Only problem was, one of the Patchwork Man's fragment personalities whispering in his brain lured him to an old silver mine where vampires had once laired. Which is how, perhaps ironically, the Patchwork Man only managed to exchange captors. He remains trapped among his heartless, always-hungry kin, unable to convince them that they're in as much danger as the rest of the world.

Name This Man: The Patchwork Man was never named, only derisively called a "patchwork man" by Loomis. Which is why he'd love to bear a real name, rather than the title he goes by. Even better if it's given to him by someone who comes to know and appreciate him.



GM intrusion: *The Patchwork Man's thirst for blood or pain overcomes him for a couple of rounds, during which he acts out.*

JOHN LOOMIS, THE WATERTOWN WARLOCK

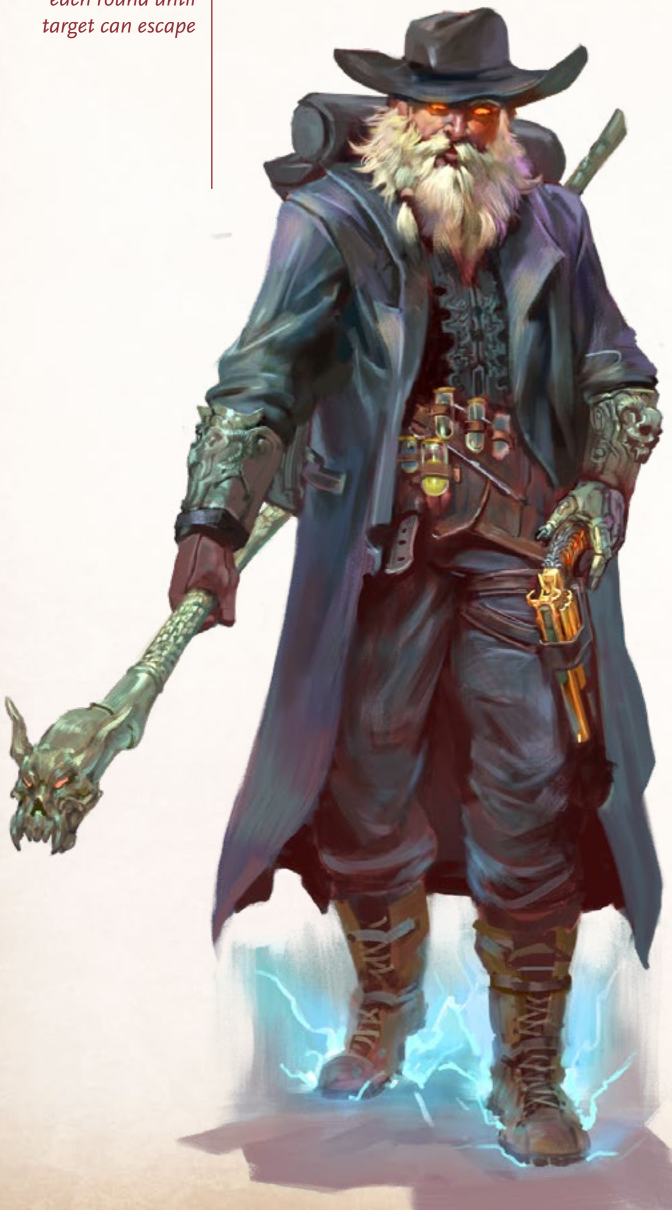
Equal parts cowboy, alchemist, and warlock, John Loomis never goes anywhere without his familiar—a 10-foot (3 m) long forgeborn metallic python called Ezekial. The warlock's brooding face is shadowed by a wide-brimmed hat of umbral darkness, though his eyes burn like windows peering straight into Hell. His duster is stitched with arcane symbols, his spurs spark lightning with each step, and his demonic six-shooter gleams with a half-life of its own on his hip.

John Loomis: *level 6; health 33; Armor 2 (from duster); umbral hat automatically deals 2 damage (ignores Armor) to melee attackers; uses alchemy and demon pistol to create various magical effects with options for damage, mental control, turning a foe to salt, flying, ignoring effects of vacuum and airlessness, and animating both the dead and objects that never lived (level 3 creations)*

Ezekial (forgeborn python): *level 4; Armor 3; bite deals damage and on failed Might defense roll holds target immobile, automatically dealing ambient damage each round until target can escape*

Angry at *This* Existence: The Watertown Warlock is put upon by the World. Because, he says, it's wrong. It never should have come into existence. The *real* world, he complains, was expunged through a "black swan" event, a positive-feedback event triggered by a dream. A dream that somehow seeded a new existence using little-understood technology even more powerful than alchemy.

The result, Loomis claims, was the birth of The Ghost Range and the surrounding territories making up the World, at the expense of John Loomis's home reality. He rants that The Ghost Range "murdered" his world, eliminating billions of people, including his parents, his siblings, his wife, and their three daughters. All gone, stolen away by a new, gruesome reality no one asked for. All that remains of them are in his memory, and compacted mercilessly across the surface of the Tomb Moon.



His Plan to Put Things Right: Well, John Loomis aims to put it all back. The decades he's spent mastering alchemy and other sorcery have all been in service to his plan to "save the world." His world, anyway. Now, all he needs is a frozen head from the Tomb Moon. A very specific frozen head that originated, like himself, in the real world. A head whose cryogenically enhanced dreams grew too entangled with a fanciful story about a place called Midnight and The Ghost Range.

Loomis plans to "wake" that frozen head using his considerable alchemical skills and, in so doing, snap it out of its fantastical dream, allowing it to remember reality. When it does, Loomis is certain the "real" world will re-condense in a powerful phase transition, replacing the PCs' reality in mere hours, restoring Loomis to the world as it was.

CLOSING A COFFIN OPENS A DOOR

There are a few ways you can introduce this adventure.

Quick Start: If you're playing this adventure as a one-shot, or you're just one to get PCs into the action, start things *in medias res* by letting them know they're on a job "clearing up another goddamned vamp nest."

Next, ask the players to introduce their characters to each other.

Finally, let the PCs know that in addition to their regular character abilities and equipment, they have some vampire-hunting gear. Give each PC a few wooden stakes, then parcel out the other unique items (the dagger, the aspergillum, the flare, and the vamp-buster alchemical round).

- Wooden stake (deals 25 points of damage to a vampire, but this attack is hindered as the vampire does everything it can to evade; most vampires are killed with a successful stake attack, but this destroys the stake too)
- Dagger blessed by a saint (treat as a light weapon that damages the vampire normally)
- Holy-water-filled aspergillum (treat as a medium melee weapon with a depletion of 1 in 1d6)
- Single-use alchemical flare (not technically a cypher) emulating sunlight in immediate range, dealing 10 points of damage to vampires in the area
- Vamp-buster alchemical round (a level 4 cypher), infusing a pistol it is fired from with the ability to deal normal damage to a vampire with each successful attack made for one minute

Alternate Hooks: If you're running this adventure as part of a larger game, you've got some leeway in getting the PCs interested in taking on the challenge of clearing out a vampire nest. In which case, options for getting the PCs involved include:

- PCs have had one or more run-ins with John Loomis before this adventure, possibly resulting in them having a score to settle with him. For instance, you could insert an encounter with John Loomis in a previous adventure, during which he steals something valuable from the PCs and leaves them to die. Later, PCs trace an "accomplice" of Loomis (the Patchwork Man) to a vampire nest in a silver mine.
- Hired by a mining company representative to investigate a silver mine where production has fallen off a cliff; no one else sent to investigate has returned.
- Begged by a mother of two missing miners to go into the mine, find her babies, and bring them to safety.
- Saw a wanted poster for the Patchwork Man and tracked him to the silver mine.

PCs who become involved with the adventure as part of a larger campaign should also have the opportunity to get some vampire-hunting equipment. Each well-carved wooden stake is only about $1 (inexpensive); however, each unique piece of equipment costs about $100 (expensive).

SILVER MINE LAYOUT

The mine consists of the following five areas: the entrance, an antechamber, a main tunnel, side tunnels, and the tail end.

Entrance: Cut into the side of a rocky hill, the silver mine's weathered timber frame stands out against the rocky landscape. Two sturdy wooden doors hang slightly askew on rusted hinges. Above the entrance, a faded sign bears the mine's name—Prospector's Hope.

Antechamber: Just inside the entrance is a small antechamber. Remnants of shattered oil lamps, broken pickaxes, and other mining equipment are scattered about.

Main Tunnel: From the antechamber, a main tunnel stretches deep into the hillside. It's roughly 6 feet (2 m) high and wide, supported by thick wooden beams every few yards. The floor is uneven, littered with loose stone and dust. Countless boot tracks in the dust go every which way.

Side Tunnels: Smaller side tunnels branch off at irregular intervals, following promising veins of ore discovered during the mining operation.

Tail End: The main tunnel ends in a large chamber where the most recent mining activity happened before the mine was abandoned. Now it's where many of the vampires infesting the mine spend the daylight hours.

BLOOD AT THE TAIL END

Vampire victim: *level 2; health 1; all tasks hindered*

Locked cage: *level 5*

Patchwork Man, page 207

Transitional vampire, page 363

Vampire, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 62*

If you're starting *in medias res*, here's one way to begin the adventure. Relay the following:

- The PCs entered the mine at high noon. Sure enough, it was full of vampires.
- The PCs pressed inward, have already put down several "half-vamps" that were not completely changed to full-strength vampires, and have taken on a full-strength varmint who nearly got one PC.
- Let PCs know they are each down to their last wooden stake, but retain their unique gear.
- Describe the scene as the PCs walk into the large chamber containing the main nest, as presented under Nest Central, Victims, and Doll in a Cage.
- Roll for initiative. For vampire tactics and other interesting flavor, see Fight in the Nest.

Nest Central: The metallic tang of blood mixes with a damp, earthy scent of decay. A dozen rusted mining carts are lined up along one wall. Half contain someone in repose, as if in a light sleep—or dead. Most have blood-smeared mouths, limbs, and clothing.

Five half-vampires (transitional vampires) and one regular vampire (six vampires in total) rest in the ore carts while the sun shines above. However, unless PCs succeed at being stealthy, the eyes of every vamp snap open when the characters advance into the room.

Victims: More people are gathered in the center of the area, some sitting slumped, others curled into tight balls. Their ragged clothes hang loosely on emaciated frames, their faces are gaunt, their eyes sunken, and all have multiple bite marks on their wrists and necks.

> "It's a hell of a thing, killin' a man. Take away all he's got, and all he's ever gonna have."
>
> —*Unforgiven* (1992 film)

Eleven vampire victims, kidnapped from nearby towns and ranches, are trapped here. They've learned that if they try to run, the vampires rouse (even if it's daylight above) and put a stop to the attempt, sometimes permanently. Every handful of days, one dies from blood loss and has to be replaced. A few of the surviving victims number among the original miners that worked the mine.

Doll in a Cage: A human-sized "doll" slumps in a locked cage made of train rails.

Of course, it's not a doll; it's the Patchwork Man. He's been trapped by his erstwhile kin for about six months. His captors were initially fascinated by him. By now, they've lost interest.

The Patchwork Man waits to see what the newcomers are up to. Once it's clear they're here to kill vampires and/or rescue victims, he clamors for rescue, too. (His vampiric abilities are too fragmented, preventing him from changing form or otherwise escaping.)

If PCs free the Patchwork Man from his cage, he joins in the fight as allies of the PCs.

Fight in the Nest: The vampires swarm the PCs, but also aren't afraid to use the victims to their advantage. Use some or all of the following GM intrusions to complicate the fight for the PCs.

- **GM intrusion (group):** A half-vamp takes their action to drain a victim, killing the victim and elevating the half-vamp to full vampire stats (level 6) for the duration of the combat.
- **GM intrusion:** A terrified victim runs into the character, hindering the PC's tasks this round.
- **GM intrusion:** The character's unique vamp-busting item turns out to be a dud.
- **GM intrusion:** Instead of dying, a vampire manages to clamp their mouth on a victim, healing the vampire (and killing the victim).
- **GM intrusion:** The character struck by the vampire is caught fast in their powerful grip. If the character doesn't escape immediately, the vampire bites them automatically.

CLEARED NEST

If PCs defeat the vampires, destroying them and/or chasing them out into the sunlight, they are free to save any surviving victims, look around a bit to see if the vampires had anything of value, and listen to what the Patchwork Man has to say.

Rescuing the Victims: Killing the vampires is sufficient for the surviving victims to leave without PCs' assistance; however, any assistance offered is gratefully accepted.

Valuables in the Nest: A search through the vampires' remains, various saddlebags, coffee tins, and other belongings nets the PCs a total of about $70 in cash, a gold wedding ring with a big diamond worth about $200, a fancy pocket watch worth about the same, and a couple of alchemical cyphers: an entombing round and an otherwhere slug.

Entombing round, page 130

Otherwhere slug, page 134

Patchwork Plea: If PCs successfully clear out the vamp nest, or at least rescue the Patchwork Man, he is thankful, but desperate for their aid. He lays out the situation with John Loomis's plan to destroy the World as described under his NPC entry.

The Patchwork Man tries his best to convince the PCs of the seriousness of the situation. He reiterates that Loomis has to be stopped now, before he moves forward with his plan. There's no time to waste; the Patchwork Man is embarrassed to admit he's already lost months thanks to becoming trapped by the vampires in the silver mine—who knows how close Loomis is to success?

If PCs need more convincing, the Patchwork Man asks that they accompany him to Loomis's estate, where they'll see for themselves how serious things are.

If the PCs still don't seem inclined to help, he says he'll hire the PCs for the job, noting that Loomis has all kinds of powerful alchemical goodies stored away. If the PCs help him, he'll see to it they come away with a fortune in cash and magic.

If the PCs take up with the Patchwork Man, he makes some additional points about the warlock and the estate where the warlock kept him:

- "Loomis kept me in the basement. Along with rats, rabbits, cursed beasts, and innocent folks he paid outlaws to kidnap. He ran experiments on us. For some reason, he seemed most interested in their heads."
- "Loomis talks when he's experimenting. He ain't got anyone else to talk to. Always going on about how the World ain't real, and about all his preparations for 'rolling it back.' Something to do with the Tomb Moon."
- "He was always going on expeditions, working on his plans. Everything he did, he did because of his obsession with how he was going to use the World as fuel to bring the *real* world back."
- "I escaped the day Loomis came down and started killing off all his test animals. He was happier than I've ever seen him. He said he'd finally found where to narrow his search for 'the dreaming head.' How The Ghost Range and the entire goddamned World would be nothing but an unfortunate memory."
- "He created me and kept me for years. So I know him. John Loomis isn't a liar, given to fantasy, nor a man to make idle threats. If he says he aims to erase the World, or break it, then he's going to do it. Unless someone stops him."
- "He told me once that he did all his most important alchemy in his 'Work Room.' But he said no one else was ever likely to find it, because 'getting in requires they look like me.'"

EMPTY ESTATE

Midnight page 154

Watertown, page 171

John Loomis kept a place on the edge of town, though none of his neighbors realized that the eccentric who lived there was the infamous warlock. Maybe that town is Midnight, but it could be anything appropriate to your campaign. It's probably not Watertown—he left there long ago. Unless you decide he *is* back in Watertown, in which case the PCs have more than just what's inside the estate to worry about.

Approaching the Estate: A wrought-iron fence, paint long since peeled away, encircles the property. Beyond the gate, a weed-choked path leads through a dead garden to a two-story house, with a third-floor turret jutting up from one corner like a watching eye.

A porch wraps around the front of the house, its boards littered with the remains of a wooden rocking chair near the main door.

There's no movement on the grounds or visible in the main house; everything looks abandoned.

Abandoned Indeed: John Loomis finalized his plans to destroy the World and left his mansion about three months ago, heading for Vanishing Hill (as described hereafter). Which means you could narratively handle the PCs' exploration, telling them that they don't find anything too out of the ordinary, other than the place being a larger, finer house than most they've visited, and that no one's obviously been in it for months. But that doesn't mean there's no possibility for danger as they look for the Work Room. . .

Abandoned But Still Dangerous: As you're narratively handling the exploration of the house, the PCs might have one or more of the Warlock Estate Encounters before they reach the Work Room entrance (a mirror somewhere in the house).

WARLOCK ESTATE ENCOUNTERS

d6	Encounter
1	A portrait hangs on a hallway wall, featuring John Loomis—see his description in his NPC entry. It crackles with defensive magic, and a portraiture forgeborn that looks like an animate painting of the warlock attacks. (If defeated, it deflates, becoming a simple canvas depicting the warlock.)
2	A corpse who has the look of someone used to sleeping rough lies rotting in the dining room. Their pockets are filled with valuables (mostly silverware). One of the PCs suddenly realizes the corpse has no feet.
3	Two animate feet (alchemically animated in the way forgeborn are) stampede out of a closet, knock over a character who fails a Speed defense roll, and attempt to escape the house. (Yes, they were the dead squatter's severed feet. No, how they came to be forgeborn-adjacent isn't obvious.)
4	Test animals kept in the basement got loose: oversize rats as big as wolves, painted with alchemical symbols. Three go after the PCs, because the beasts are ravenous—they've already eaten all the other test animals.
5	A locked safe (level 5) is discovered, but the inside is protected by a mind-hollowing alchemical symbol. The safe looks as if it once held a pistol, but only the gun case remains.
6	Someone or something shrieks like a dying person, echoing through the house. Depending on where the PCs are, the sound seems to be coming through a wall, floor, or ceiling. But if investigated, no source is apparent.

John Loomis, page 208

Portraiture forgeborn: *level 4; each time it damages a character, more and more of that character appears as a 2D painting in the empty frame the forgeborn departed*

Animate feet: *level 3*

Oversize rats: *level 3*

Mind-Hollowing Symbol: *level 5; creatures who see it and fail an Intellect defense roll take 5 Intellect damage (ignores Armor) each round until they succeed on a defense roll*

WORK ROOM

The Work Room is an extradimensional space accessible via a mirror. Depending on how much time you want the PCs to spend exploring the estate, they could find it right away in a main room, in the upper turret, or hidden away in a closet.

Mirror Entrance: This full-length mirror, resting against a wall, has a thick iron frame scribed with alchemical symbols. Besides offering a nice reflection, the mirror fades to become a passage to the main Work Room for about a minute if it reflects John Loomis's face. Any relatively good likeness has the same effect, including someone with an artistic bent attempting to draw Loomis who succeeds on a difficulty 5 Intellect task. The portrait of the warlock found elsewhere in the house also triggers the passage. Finally, destroying the mirror (which is a lot tougher than normal glass) will permanently open the passage.

Full-length mirror: *level 8*

Heads in the Work Room: This windowless room is filled with stuff, but what draws the PCs' attention first are mounted heads of every cryptid the PCs know of (i.e., chupacabras, jackalopes, quetzalsaurs, etc.), and a few they don't. Besides the heads of cursed beasts and strange folk, half a dozen random human heads are also mounted.

Most of the heads are slightly animate, blinking, muttering, drooling, or snoring; one head suddenly shrieks like a dying person, so loudly that it can be heard outside the extradimensional space. Attempts at conversations with the heads provide no real information, though sometimes a human head will mutter unsettling inanities.

Clutter of Tools: The Work Room is crammed with tables, shelves, and a single cluttered desk. Surfaces are covered with vials, tinctures, dusts, potions, figurines, books, journals, notes, glassware, and various tools used in alchemy. A few are objects the PCs probably can't easily identity, including a brass box the size of a bank safe squatting in one corner—the Artemythera Mechanism.

Research Project Revealed: PCs who spend a good half hour searching the room and reading through his project notes eventually piece together what the warlock was working on.

In a nutshell, Loomis has gone to the Tomb Moon to "revert reality" and bring back the world of his origin, which will destroy The Ghost Range in the process. And if that doesn't work, he'll try bringing the moon down on the World, because he'll be almost as happy "seeing it all burn."

A few particulars may interest PCs who find the threat credible enough to try to prevent Loomis from following through on his radical plan, as follows.

Reaching the Tomb Moon: Loomis's project notes describe a lot of failed attempts at reaching the Tomb Moon, including his efforts to find something called the Hand of the Eclipse that would supposedly call the Tomb Moon into the sky, and a disastrous attempt to build an alchemical rocket.

Hand of the Eclipse, page 138

If they knew where to obtain it, the Hand of the Eclipse would allow the PCs to call the Tomb Moon into the sky according to their own timetable.

However, he eventually discovered three things granting him a path forward.

The first is that he learned that Vanishing Hill is actually a fragment that fell off the Tomb Moon long ago. The hill can act as a gate between the World and the Tomb Moon, but the hill is rarely present—it only exists when the Tomb Moon is in the sky. Loomis has a map of the region hung up on one wall of the Work Room with Vanishing Hill highlighted.

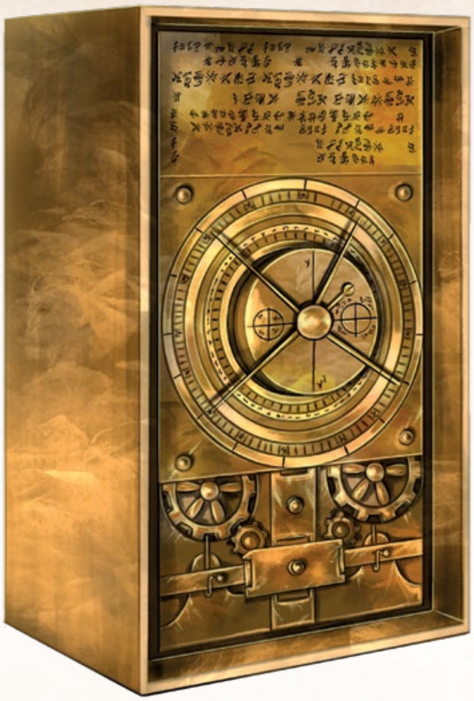
The second thing Loomis got his hands on was something called the Artemythera Mechanism, which his notes indicate he pieced together from parts found in a variety of proscribed zones.

The third thing is a substance called necrovoke, prepared from vampire remains. (In fact, the remains of the vampires the Patchwork Man is made from—if PCs learn that from the notes and tell him, the Patchwork Man doesn't quite know how to react.)

Patchwork Man, page 207

Artemythera Mechanism: *level 5*

Artemythera Mechanism: This huge box the size of a bank safe is a fiendishly complex brass device filled with hundreds of tiny gears. It's too big to easily transport, but it predicts when and where the Tomb Moon will appear in the sky. PCs can use the Artemythera Mechanism's crank to discover all future appearances, with multiple coming up in the next few days.



Necrovoke: A case of several dozen glass jars filled with viscous bluish-black goop sits on the floor near the desk. A note resting on the case reads "Necrovoke. Imbibe and apply before moonwalks to prevent immediate death and reanimation."

Necrovoke, one jar: *level 3; grants user protection from airless environments for three days; treated users can telepathically speak with other treated users within short range during this period*

The warlock's notes describe the Tomb Moon surface as an airless void. As Loomis is an alchemical genius, his research describes how he devised necrovoke from vampire remains as a remedy. At least, that's what the notes claim. PCs can't really be sure before they actually try it, because the stuff is inactive anyplace other than on the Tomb Moon. Which is good in one sense, because the material doesn't count toward PCs' cypher limits.

What Frozen Head? John Loomis's plans hinge on his belief that a certain frozen head can be nudged to reshape reality if awakened from its deathless cryogenic dream. Some notes discuss a ledger where all his research about that singular dreaming head exists. He apparently took that ledger with him, along with a couple of cases of necrovoke and most of his other alchemical elixirs and power items, when he left for Vanishing Hill about three months ago, according to the last journal dates.

Other Loot: PCs who want to loot the Work Room for valuables other than necrovoke don't find much. That said, PCs who succeed on a difficulty 3 perception task find a misplaced box with alchemical rounds and slugs beneath the desk. Loose inside are four bullets: an impervious slug, an interrogation round, an otherwhere slug, and a soul-killing round.

Impervious slug, page 133

Interrogation round, page 133

Otherwhere slug, page 134

Soul-killing round, page 134

VANISHING HILL

Once PCs piece together Loomis's specific plans, they might head for Vanishing Hill. Unless they've got something else up their sleeve, the gate between the formation and the Tomb Moon that activates when the Tomb Moon is full is their best bet for following the warlock. They either have or know where to obtain the Hand of the Eclipse (following the events of "Showdown in Alchemy Alley"), or they've put together a timeline of future Tomb Moon appearances using the mechanism in Loomis's Work Room.

Chapter 15: Showdown in Alchemy Alley, page 180

It's possible the PCs are familiar with the region containing Vanishing Hill, possibly even having walked by it—or at least the rocky plain where it was supposed to be—if they've played the adventure "Five Card Fiasco." This time, of course, the mystery of a vanishing landform is a little more serious than the curiosity it may have seemed like the first time.

Chapter 16: Five Card Fiasco, page 192

TRIP TO THE HILL

The Patchwork Man insists on accompanying the PCs, and follows secretly if they refuse his aid. To shade himself from potential sunlight (both in The Ghost Range and possibly on the surface of the Tomb Moon), he wears a wide-brimmed hat, duster, gloves, face mask, and shades, and carries a huge black sunshade. He doesn't *need* necrovoke, but he'll use it so he can telepathically communicate with the PCs while they're on the Tomb Moon.

As shown on the map, the PCs only need to travel a little ways into the Hellscramble Barrens, a badlands region. If PCs follow the ghost path, they should be relatively safe.

Ghost Path: If the PCs started their adventure in the town of Midnight, they're probably following the path starting from the southeastern part of the map. Without the map, the ghost path is nearly impossible to find. Even with the map, staying on it is tricky. At times it seems like a path made by erosion and flash floods, other times a secret way worn down by animals hunting for prey or water; as such, it sometimes lapses for hundreds of yards at a time before picking up again.

Gehenna Drifts: These drifts are made of purplish sand, and sometimes shift or collapse unexpectedly. The Ghost Path leading through them is a rut that sucks at each footstep. It's been too many months since John Loomis's last expedition this way, so there's no overt sign of his passage.

Vanishing Hill: The area is usually an empty, rocky plain. But the formation appears just as predicted by the mechanism (or when the Tomb Moon is called by the Hand of the Eclipse). The mechanism's prediction indicates the Tomb Moon will stay in the sky a total of six hours.

When visible, Vanishing Hill resembles nothing so much as a lone, jutting tooth glowing in the horrid light of the Tomb Moon hanging above it in the sky. Its weathered face is pocked with deep shadows that slowly shift and flow. An especially large cavity opens into darkness at its base.

UNDER HILL

If PCs enter the 30-foot (9 m) wide cavity at the base of Vanishing Hill, they can follow the catacomb-lined tunnel straight into the Vault, and from there, into the Moon Gate.

Catacomb-Lined Tunnel: The cavity narrows into a lightless catacomb-like passage with a domed ceiling and walls regularly pocked by shadowed rectangular niches. The way is weirdly smoothed, as if polished, and light brought in gleams with an oily sheen that seems to cover every surface.

The niches are completely empty, even of dust. To touch, the oily sheen seems to be a feature of the mineral the tunnel is carved through.

The tunnel traverses about 200 feet (60 m) before opening into a wider, dimly lit vault.

Patchwork Man, page 207

GM intrusion (group): *As the PCs travel, reality "flickers." Damn it all, it seems like John Loomis's crazy plan just might work, and he must be close to achieving it!*

GM intrusion: *When the Tomb Moon appears, the Patchwork Man "vamps out" and attacks the character for a couple of rounds until calmed or he gets a hold of himself.*

Badlands, page 47

TOMB MOON RELATIVITY

It's not immediately clear to the PCs what would happen to anyone still inside Vanishing Hill or someone still on the Tomb Moon when the moon disappears from the sky and the hill fades. However, if the PCs have a method to find out this secret (or they read through Loomis's notes on the camp table in the vault), they learn that when the Tomb Moon is not in the sky, no time passes on it or inside Vanishing Hill. So someone caught inside when the moon and hill vanish wouldn't really notice—time for them would flow normally, and assuming they survive, they could exit through the gate in Vanishing Hill the next time the Tomb Moon shines for everyone else in the World. But from an outside perspective, days or months or even years might pass before the explorers return from the Tomb Moon. (If it becomes important to determine, choose timing that seems most interesting, or about six months, all else being equal.)

GATE OPENS WHEN TOMB MOON IS FULL
Vanishing Hill
Ghost Path

Vault, page 216

GM intrusion (group): *When the Tomb Moon appears, a tombdrift in dust-devil form appears out of the Gehenna Drifts and rushes the PCs.*

Tombdrift, page 93

GM intrusion: *A weird frisson passes through the character. They're certain many days have passed outside Vanishing Hill, and they're right: the Tomb Moon has faded and returned.*

Vault: The tunnel opens into a wider domed cavity roughly 50 feet (16 m) in diameter, also pocked with shadowed rectangular niches running up every wall.

A wagon is parked in the chamber, half-filled with wooden crates. The balance of the crates are scattered about the vault floor, most levered open with their lids leaning on one side. A wooden camp table stands near the wagon, its surface a litter of papers and small objects, as well as a still-glowing lantern.

On the far side of the vault, another cavity beckons, though this one is hazed as if with pearlescent mist—this is the Moon Gate.

PCs who take a little more time to investigate find the following.

- Most of the crates are filled with canned meats and vegetables. It seems like enough to feed dozens of people for many months. Only a small fraction of the cans have been opened, presumably eaten and discarded.
- The harness for whatever was pulling the wagon wasn't made for horses, but rather for a very tall humanoid being—maybe a big forgeborn. If asked, the Patchwork Man indicates that he's heard the warlock mention a "locomotem" forgeborn in his rambling monologues, a huge metal alchemical creation that can convey passengers or pull wagons (or train cars).
- The lantern on the table burns with a flameless light—it's an alchemical light source that'll burn steadily for years (depletion 1 in 1d20; check each year it burns).
- Several empty jars of necrovoke are pushed to one edge of the table. Another case of the material lies open beneath the table.
- A journal and a ledger lie open on the table. The journal's title is "Progress" and the ledger's title is "Dreaming Head."

Necrovoke, page 214

Progress Journal: PCs who peruse this journal learn Loomis is on the cusp of finding and waking the dreaming head he seeks on the surface of the Tomb Moon—time is short if PCs want to stop him.

That's enough of a takeaway to move things along, but if PCs demand more details of what's written in the journal, use the following:

- Loomis has gone back and forth between the Tomb Moon and this staging area several times; each time, he says his detector has zeroed in more closely on the head he seeks. He's now certain he's made his last return trip to Vanishing Hill—next time he goes out, he'll finish the job.
- From Loomis's perspective, only three days have passed since he left his estate; PCs know he's been gone at least three months.
- Loomis understands a lot more time has gone by in the World, thanks to time on the Tomb Moon being relative (see Tomb Moon Relativity). So he knows he's on a deadline—if enough time passes in the outer world, someone is sure to come sniffing after him.
- Loomis has been "scouring the cryo-canyons," looking for the dreaming head.
- The last entry is far more jubilant than the grim manner of all the previous notes. It simply says, "I found him! After all this time. Still dreaming. When next the Tomb Moon is full, I'll wake the head. I'll have my world back, and relegate this horror to the forgotten dream it should have remained."

Dreaming Head Ledger: The pages in this ledger are weird—they probably don't look like anything the PCs have ever seen before. They're glossy, the print includes colors and weirdly vivid pictures, and folks depicted are dressed strangely. Sleek metallic medical devices and big steel tanks with glowing buttons feature prominently.

If a character reading through the material succeeds on a difficulty 3 Intellect task, they discern the following: It's a brochure advertising deceased head preservation against the possibility of future revival. John Loomis thinks one of those heads "dreamed" his world away by creating this one. He aims to reverse that dream by finding and alchemically waking the head.

Don't overburden your players with details, unless they're fascinated enough to want more:

- Muxcom Life Extension Institute (MLEI) is the company that printed the brochures and that freezes heads. PCs have never heard of it, and in fact, it doesn't exist in their reality.
- MLEI is selling "Neuropreservation," preserving only the head in cryostasis, billed as much less expensive than full-body preservation, given the cost of boosting cargo to the moon's surface, where MLEI's cryostasis facilities are sited.
- MLEI promises to keep client heads from degrading using their "proprietary quantum excitation device to keep brain synapses minimally active, enough to allow them to dream."
- Loomis doesn't know the head's name. But he's created a sort of "dream detector" that will reveal the head when he gets close enough.
- Marginalia scrawled throughout the brochures in John Loomis's hand are mostly obscenities. But PCs garner that Loomis's "dream detector" has identified a particular head as the root cause of everything. MLEI's quantum excitation and the frozen head's subconscious combined to create a "black swan" event that replaced his world. Waking the head, he believes, should reverse everything.

Moon Gate: The cavity on the other side of the vault from where the PCs entered is hazed with a glimmery, swirling gray-white mist. Walking through gives the PCs the sudden feeling of hurtling through a void at unbelievable speeds as they're flung through space toward the Tomb Moon. A moment later, they're deposited on Mare Mortis.

MARE MORTIS

PCs emerge from a matching Moon Gate (which works like the one in Vanishing Hill). They find that the surface of the Tomb Moon is breathtaking, literally.

Cratered Desolation: A desolate, pockmarked gray surface stretches every which way under an inky void littered with stars that don't twinkle. Craters overlap and intersect across a landscape of shattered colossal structures that emerge from the regolith like fossilized bones. Their oddly angled spires and broken arches cast long, stark shadows across the Sea of Death.

Life and Breath: If PCs imbibed and applied necrovoke before going through the Moon Gate, the substance energizes the moment they step onto the Tomb Moon, giving them an undead-like pallor, the ability to suppress their need for breathing, and the ability to speak telepathically to each other if within short range. PCs without this protection gasp and freeze in the airless void, dying in about a minute, after which they're reanimated by the moon's influence as mindless zombies.

- *Patchwork Wrinkle:* Each PC also gains an immediate sense of where the Patchwork Man is (assuming he's on the moon).

  Should PCs decide to explore this sensation further, a successful difficulty 5 Intellect task reveals a conduit through which they think they could control the Patchwork Man as if he was one of their limbs. (Which is true; each round a PC succeeds on a difficulty 5 Intellect task as their action, they can control the Patchwork Man's action, or attempt to wrest control of him from another.)
- *Loomis Knows:* If the Patchwork Man is with the PCs, he's also using necrovoke. Which means Loomis also knows the Patchwork Man just appeared on the Tomb Moon.

Lunar Movement: Everything weighs a lot less than the PCs are used to; the first few minutes they spend on the Tomb Moon, all their movement tasks are hindered. However, as they get used to the situation, that hindrance falls away, and after a few more minutes, all their movement rolls are eased.

Despite being called a "sea," the Sea of Death is dry as moon dust.

Zombie, page 371

Zombie, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 170*

FINDING LOOMIS IN MARE MORTIS

Tracks mar the lunar dust (human boots, huge forgeborn feet that sometimes resemble rolling train wheels, and a giant slithering snake), leading toward a particular cyclopean structure. The warlock is not immediately visible—he's inside the MLEI Cryo Bunker, its integrity cracked by ancient impacts.

Besides the cryo bunker, dozens of other distinct regions exist on the Tomb Moon, but they lie outside the scope of this adventure.

MLEI Cryo Bunker: Most encounters PCs are likely to have occur as they follow Loomis's crisscrossing tracks to and then around a bunker-like structure that's dozens of miles wide. Fissures split this "mausoleum" in many places, from which spill hundreds of metallic canisters. Each canister has a glass window, revealing a withered, frozen human head inside held in a web of dead wires.

If PCs poke and prod any given head enough, they discover it's undead—animated by the Tomb Moon's influence, but safely ensconced in its particular canister.

Lunar Oddities: Narratively describe the PCs' search, as noted under Waking Event. Before they find the warlock, they could have one or more interstitial encounters on the Mare Mortis Encounters table.

MARE MORTIS ENCOUNTERS

d6	Encounter
1	A dozen wandering head spiders—frozen heads that've escaped their canisters and skitter about on necromantically animated wires.
2	The Patchwork Man telepathically says "Oh, oh" a moment before he throws down his umbrella and begins stripping off his sun protection—Loomis has taken remote control of him. If PCs don't intercede or shade him, the Patchwork Man burns up in the sunlight.
3	Shadows lengthen, darken, and take on the form of a shade of the tomb that detects a hint of life in the PCs despite their necrovoke protection. PCs who pretend the part of undead with a successful interaction roll might be able to escape its attention without a fight.
4	A couple of humans in single-piece body-covering suits with bulbous, round helmets climb out from under some weird metallic wreckage and attack—their smashed-in helmets reveal the visages of ravenous undead ghouls.
5	**GM intrusion:** The character accidentally wipes off a large swath of necrovoke (or it just loses efficacy), taking 5 points of ambient damage each round until they can apply and imbibe more.
6	**GM intrusion (group):** A psychic rumble is followed by a wave of unreality, falling across the PCs like the sensation of fainting, dealing 1 point of Intellect damage to each—Loomis has found his head and started to wake it up!

Head spiders: *level 2, Speed defense as level 3; burrowing wires deal 2 Intellect damage*

Shade of the tomb, page 94

Ghoul, page 332

WAKING EVENT

PCs looking for the warlock finally track him down in one of the hundreds of metal cryo chambers inside the MLEI Cryo Bunker. Most chambers are tiled with strange, dead machinery and metallic canisters storing undead heads.

Cryo Chamber: Inside the MLEI Cryo Bunker is one more hollow metallic chamber whose walls are tiled with strange machinery and metallic canisters. Unlike other canisters PCs have seen, a handful on the walls in this chamber shine with dull red status lights. They contain frozen heads that, while not quite alive, are also not quite undead—they're still minimally conscious and dreaming thanks to otherworldly "quantum excitation" sorcery.

Alchemy of Waking: John Loomis works at an improvised alchemical work bench at the chamber's center, his attention on a canister containing a frozen head—this is the singular dreaming head that Loomis believes is responsible for destroying his world. Dull red status lights gleam from the canister's readouts. Not far from Loomis is his forgeborn "familiar" Ezekial and the looming locomotem.

Simply destroying the frozen head won't work, Loomis has ascertained. Which is why he's undertaking a carefully prepared alchemical process designed to wake the head in a manner similar to how he imbues forgeborn with consciousness.

Let's Talk: Loomis would rather convince PCs to his side than fight. He promises the characters that if they allow him to succeed, he'll bring them with him back to the real world when the flimflammery of The Ghost Range is forgotten like the dream it should have remained. A real world of amazing technology, free of the undead, demons, ghosts, curses, and ancient cosmic beings.

Or Not: John Loomis defends himself with all his considerable abilities if PCs attack, entrusting the head to the interior of his locomotem forgeborn as his first action. Joining him in the fight are his locomotem and his forgeborn "familiar" Ezekial.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The alchemy Loomis is attempting to wake the head takes days, so the PCs aren't under time pressure to stop the ritual. However, if Loomis or the head survive and the PCs can't regroup and try again, Loomis may eventually succeed.

Alternatively, if the PCs destroy the head, Loomis gives up. Demoralized, he's willing to face whatever the PCs have in store for him, unless it's to kill him, in which case he defends himself to the end.

Finally, PCs might decide to let Loomis try to change reality (or fail to stop him). If that happens, Loomis ushers them into a brand-new reality, whether they want it or not. Despite it being a world where technology trumps magic, it's not as "shining" and amazing as Loomis described—it's more like the Moon as presented in The Revel. Or perhaps like an outpost on the Moon maintained by a corporation based in Edge City.

XP for Concluding the Adventure: Award each PC 1 XP for destroying the vamp nest, 1 XP if they rescued any of the vampires' victims (including the Patchwork Man), 1 XP if they went to the Tomb Moon to challenge Loomis, and 3 XP if they stopped Loomis from waking the head and changing reality (or 3 XP if they decide to go along with the reality revision without fighting the warlock).

CLIFF-HANGER FINALE?

Sometimes cliff-hangers make fun adventure finales. A few options to surprise PCs include:

- A character who used necrovoke is surprised when they begin sprouting fangs.
- PCs who try heading back to the World through the Moon Gate find it does not work.
- Loomis (who PCs killed) reappears, except his head is actually a frozen "head spider."

John Loomis, page 208

Dreaming head in canister: *level 5*

John Loomis: *level 6; health 33; Armor 2 (from duster); umbral hat automatically deals 2 damage (ignores Armor) to melee attackers; uses alchemy and demon pistol to create various magical effects with options for damage, mental control, turning a foe to salt, flying, ignoring effects of vacuum and airlessness, and animating both the dead and objects that never lived (level 3 creations)*

Ezekial (forgeborn python): *level 4; Armor 3; bite deals damage and on failed Might defense roll holds target immobile, automatically dealing ambient damage each round until target can escape*

GM intrusion: *Loomis tears a page from a book on his improvised workbench, which becomes an inkubus forgeborn that attacks a character.*

Inkubus, page 86

GM intrusion (group): *The shade of the tomb returns (or shows up for the first time).*

Shade of the Tomb, page 94

GM intrusion: *Loomis uses the Worship power word subtle cypher on the character.*

Worship, page 127

GM intrusion (group): *The Patchwork Man sacrifices himself, essentially tearing himself into pieces. When he does, the necrovoke protecting Loomis (and all the PCs!) begins to degrade, though not as quickly as he'd hoped. If PCs (and Loomis) don't leave the Tomb Moon within the next ten minutes, they'll lose its protection.*

The Revel is the setting described in The Stars Are Fire, our genre sourcebook on science fiction.

Edge City is a location in Neon Rain, our genre sourcebook on cyberpunk.

CYPHER SHORT: DEAD VENGEANCE

For directions on how to run a Cypher Short, as well as information on the types, descriptors, and foci, visit this link and download the free Cypher Shorts PDF: myMCG.info/cyphershorts

The Premise: The PCs were in a posse that eliminated a notorious gunslinger. Now, he's risen from the grave and seeks vengeance on those who put him there.

CHARACTER CREATION

The characters live in an Old West setting with a supernatural twist (as might become clear when The Setup is revealed). "Dead Vengeance" can be played with first-tier PCs created using options from this book, *High Noon at Midnight*.

Give each PC two alchemical cyphers.

Alchemical manifest cyphers, page 128

Alternately, you can create streamlined Cypher Short characters, such as the following:

Prospector: This character probably has the Searching and Discovering type. The player should decide the character's name and brief personality and how they once struck it rich. They have a pickaxe (medium weapon) and a map to an old mine, which they might think is a good place to hide from the undead gunslinger hunting them.

Preacher: The Talking type suits this character. The player decides the character's name, brief personality, and what sort of spirituality they preach. They have a holy book, a hunting knife (light weapon), and some other sort of religious object, such as a rosary.

Deputy: This is likely someone with the Performing Physical Actions type. The player decides their name, a brief personality, and how well folks in town know them. They have a pistol (medium long-range weapon) and a duster (light armor).

Gambler: The Sneaking type best fits the character. The player decides the character's name, brief personality, and how much they're known around the card tables. They have a small handgun (light short-range weapon), a deck of cards or set of dice, and a lucky rabbit's foot.

Unnatural Philosopher: Either the Searching and Discovering type or the Wielding Supernatural Powers type is ideal for this character. The player should decide the character's name, brief personality, and specific area of interest. They have a journal and writing instruments, binoculars, a specimen bag, and a hunting knife (light weapon).

THE SETUP

It's midafternoon and the characters are assembled in the Sagebrush, their favorite saloon in town (a tiny place called Ponderosa). The PCs bonded while serving on a posse led by Sheriff Alphonso Bronson to find and take down the notorious gunslinger Zachery Sutton.

Other posse members: *level 3; long-range pistol attacks deal 4 damage*

- Besides the PCs and Sheriff Bronson, three other posse members were Davy Banks, Rowena Gilson, and Russel Jennings. Each had a personal beef with Sutton.
- The posse tracked Zachery Sutton to an abandoned train depot. Sutton came out with guns blazing, and the posse returned fire. Sutton went down in a hail of bullets.
- Sutton was put in the ground at Boot Hill, the cemetery outside of town where gunfighters who "died with their boots on" are buried.
- That was a week ago. Since then, PCs have met every day in the Sagebrush for a drink at 3 p.m., which was when Sutton went down. Other posse members are invited but haven't joined in.
- The PCs' afternoon is interrupted when something smashes through the window and thuds on the saloon floor: Sheriff Alphonso Bronson's head. Attached to it is a note that reads, "Hell didn't want me. Now I'm coming for you. I'm putting you all in the ground where you put me. —Zachery Sutton"

POSSIBLE ENCOUNTERS

As the PCs seek to flee from, find, or investigate the revenant Zachery Sutton, they may discover or encounter some or all of the following.

Panic in the Streets: Immediately after the head-hurling incident or later, a riot breaks out, with panicked townsfolk screaming, running about, and carrying on, endangering elderly folks, children, and other bystanders until someone calms them down by succeeding on a couple of difficulty 4 interaction tasks.

Holed Up in the Chapel: PCs learn the three other posse members have holed up in the chapel and are taking potshots at whoever approaches. Yelled negotiation attempts reveal the three believe Sutton can take the form of anyone, even the PCs, by replacing them after he kills them. They think one of the PCs is probably actually Sutton, and won't let them approach. They're serious, and armed.

It's true—undead Sutton can steal other people's flesh after he kills them. And in fact, Davy Banks, one of the posse members in the chapel, *is* Sutton. Which is clear if PCs visit the chapel a second time, when everyone is dead, and find Davy Banks's discarded skin. (If PCs already know Sutton can take on other people's form the first time they visit, things may go differently.)

Sutton's Grave: If PCs investigate Zachery Sutton's grave, they discover it's been dug up. The pine coffin at the bottom is shattered as if something burst out of it. A closer look reveals the discarded clothing and skins of two people. One is the town postmaster. The other is Davy Banks, one of the other three posse members.

Let's Split Up: If PCs split up for any reason, Sutton goes after a lone character; PCs who attempt to hide their trail so Sutton can't find them must succeed on a difficulty 5 stealth task.

Murders: Things may grow calm and leads go cold over the course of twenty-four hours, but every ten or so hours that Sutton isn't found and dealt with, a random townsperson is found murdered—strung up, skinned alive, or staked down over a nest of stinging ants that attack investigating PCs.

Bank Heist: Taking advantage of the chaos, three outlaws try to rob the town bank.

Close Shave: PCs follow news/clues/sounds of a struggle to the barbershop. Inside they discover Zachery Sutton cutting the barber's beard . . . by shaving his skin off. PCs can engage Sutton here, and maybe even stop him. But it ain't permanent unless they take the proper steps (see Conclusion).

Called Out: At some point, PCs see the following scrawled in fresh blood and gore on the water tower: "Draw against me at high noon tomorrow in front of the jail, and we'll settle this." Sutton shows, but attempts to ambush PCs from behind rather than enter a fair fight. To distract them, he sends a zombie dressed like him lashed to a horse headed toward the jail.

GM INTRUSIONS

- **Ricochet:** The character is struck for 4 points of damage by a stray bullet during a shootout.
- **Sutton in Disguise:** An NPC (or a PC who is in on it) shoots the character in the back—they're actually Sutton in disguise.
- **Gets Away:** Sutton manages to elude the PCs after ducking into an alley.
- **Best Laid Plans:** The PCs' plan is endangered by a bumbling townsperson or child.
- **Runaway Stagecoach:** A panicked stagecoach driver runs a PC down for 5 points of damage.

CONCLUSION

The Cypher Short ends when the PCs defeat Zachery Sutton and then salt and burn the body.

Zachery Sutton (demon): *level 5, initiative and stealth as level 8; health 23; Armor 1; long-range pistol attack deals 6 damage; can take form of dead person by stealing their skin*

Stinging ant nest: *level 4; takes only 1 damage from attacks that don't affect an area*

Outlaw: *level 3, initiative and gambling as level 4; long-range gun attack deals 4 damage*

Zombie, page 371

Zombie, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 170*

CYPHER SHORT:
GUNSMOKE EXPRESS

For directions on how to run a Cypher Short, as well as information on the types, descriptors, and foci, visit this link and download the free Cypher Shorts PDF: myMCG.info/cyphershorts

Give each PC two cyphers.

Cyphers, page 377

Expensive item, page 202

The Premise: The PCs are part of a gang of outlaws attempting to rob a train. Aside from expected dangers, the PCs discover cursed cargo that threatens to consume them all.

CHARACTER CREATION

The characters live in an Old West setting with a supernatural twist. “Gunsmoke Express” can be played with first-tier PCs created using options from this book, *High Noon at Midnight*.

Alternately, you can create streamlined Cypher Short characters, such as the following:

The Brains: This character might have the Searching and Discovering type. The player should decide the character’s name and brief personality, and an ingenious scheme they once contrived. They have the Gunsmoke Express train schedule and a tip that unlike normal, the train will include an armored rail car supposedly full of gold and stardust. They also have a pistol (medium long-range weapon).

The Swindler: The Sneaking type best fits the character. The player decides the character’s name, brief personality, and a story of a past heist they succeeded at. They have a small handgun (light short-range weapon), lockpicks, a stick of dynamite (level 5) and some inside info on locks used on armored rail cars (easing lockpicking tasks for such cars).

The Muscle: This is likely someone with the Performing Physical Actions type. The player decides their name, a brief personality, and what sorts of scars they have. They have a shotgun (heavy immediate-range weapon) and a duster (light armor).

The Insider: The Talking type best fits this character. The player decides the character’s name, brief personality, and what sort of fashionable attire they sport. They have grooming and beauty aids, a small handgun (light short-range weapon), and a valuable pocket watch (expensive item). They also have a train conductor disguise.

The Luck: Wielding Supernatural Powers is a good type choice for this character. The player should decide the character’s name, brief personality, and an idea of the kind of enchanted relic they believe one of the train cars is transporting.

THE SETUP

PC outlaws have a plan for robbing a train—the Gunsmoke Express—that includes an armored rail car presumably filled with valuables.

- Taking advantage of The Insider’s knowledge and position aboard the train, all the PCs except The Insider begin play bundled inside empty crates in a rear cargo car.
- The plan is that once the train pulls out of the depot, The Insider will move to the rear of the train to extract the others from their crates.
- Once free, the outlaws plan on moving through the train toward the engine, gathering valuables as they go, and dealing with any resistance as they find it. In particular, they’re looking for the armored rail car that’s supposed to be full of riches, including coinage bound for a bank opening.
- After the outlaws seize the engine, they plan to stop the train at a pre-selected spot a few hours down the track where two partners—Annie Marsh and Wille Carter—wait with a coach for the loot, after which the train can be sent on its way. What could go wrong?

***Partners:** level 2, riding and stagecoach driving as level 4*

POSSIBLE ENCOUNTERS

The following events and encounters occur over the course of just a handful of hours, beginning as the Gunsmoke Express pulls out of the depot.

Pinkertons: As The Insider makes their way back to let the other PCs out of their crates, they come across a passenger car that wasn't on the train dispatch, containing at five Pinkerton agents hired specifically to guard this particular train run. The Insider may be stopped and questioned. As PCs attempt to rob the train, they'll eventually have to deal with the Pinkertons.

Top of the Train: If PCs decide to move along the top of the train to travel between cars, the swaying and jolting of the train cars hinders tasks to leap and climb between them.

Passenger Cars: Several cars contain a diverse mix of passengers, most of which know well enough to raise their hands and give over any valuables demanded of them. PCs might score up to ten moderately priced items by robbing them. But there's always a troublemaker in any group who thinks it's a good idea to fight back against the armed outlaws.

Haunted Car: This car is dark and corroded, and looks ancient even by the standards of the day. Even though trainyard workers swear they don't add it to any given line, it still shows up from time to time. PCs who investigate looking for valuables find the ghost of a child named Sal Ellison who died aboard this very car some decades before and haunts the rails ever since, looking for her parents. If PCs comfort or otherwise deal with the spirit, they find (or are gifted) a set of expensive earrings.

Armored Rail Car: This car features a huge locked safe (level 6), in the style The Swindler is prepared for. However, along with the Pinkertons—who're keeping a special eye on traffic into this rail car—there's an alchemical trap protecting the safe.

In the Safe: If PCs manage to break into the safe, they find five treasury bags bulging with coins (each containing a very expensive amount). However, a dangerous relic is also being transported: a Nihilal tendril horn in a rotten black saddlebag. When first disturbed, it makes a sound so horrible that the entire train shakes and draws the attention of something awful.

Engine: Elsabeth Becker, the engineer running the train, is probably ready for the PCs if there's been any sort of gunplay. She's locked herself into the engine car (level 6). That said, she might be open to negotiating if PCs want to share their take with her.

GM INTRUSIONS

- **Overloaded:** Just before the train departs, workers drop a heavy crate full of ore right on top of the flimsier crate a PC is hiding in; getting them out safely requires a successful difficulty 6 Might task, or someone gets a little crushed for 4 points of ambient damage.
- **Low Bridge:** Characters moving along the top or side of the train are surprised by a low and narrow bridge tunnel, taking 4 points of damage on a failed difficulty 4 Speed defense roll to duck flat against the train. A failed difficulty 4 Might roll means the PC is knocked from the train. (Getting back on is a difficulty 5 Speed-based task, which a PC can retry a few times before all the cars pass and the PC is left behind.)
- **Gatling Gun Emplacement:** PCs moving on the top of the train are surprised when a Pinkerton agent opens up with a train-mounted machine gun near the engine, but with sight lines a good ways back along the top of the train.
- **Partner Betrayal:** The two partners try to double-cross the PCs after the coach is loaded (so the PCs will have to fight or bargain with them).

CONCLUSION

The Cypher Short ends when the PCs make off with their loot, die trying, or give up.

Nihilal tendril horn, page 139

Drawing Attention, page 124

Pinkerton agent: *level 3; long-range rifle attack deals 5 damage*

Engineer: *level 4, train-related tasks as level 6; long-range rifle attack deals 6 damage*

Price Categories, page 202

Troublemaker: *level 4; immediate-range shotgun attack deals 6 damage*

Ghost, page 331

Ghost, Cypher System Bestiary, *page 44*

Gatling gun emplacement: *level 4; two long-range attacks deal 4 damage each*

Alchemical trap: *level 5; on failed Intellect defense roll target spends next few rounds attempting to throw themself from train*

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